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LONELY
CARLOTTA

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LONELY CARLOTTA:

"*A CRIMSON BUD OF A ROSE.*"

A Novel.

BY

A. E. N. BEWICKE.

"One touch of Nature makes the whole world kin."
SHAKESPEARE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



LONDON:
R. BENTLEY & SON, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.
1874.

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Book I.

(*Continued.*)

TRANSPLANTED.

CHAPTER XII.

"SHALL I go and speak to Charlotte?" asked Margaret, after breakfast, of her mother. "I daresay she is shy about coming down."

"Then she must overcome that feeling," said Mrs. Anderson, calmly. "She has certainly every reason to be shy. But I do not wish any fuss to be made about her. That would only confirm her in her obstinacy. If she is wanted for anything in particular, she can be sent for, and then I expect she will come down at once."

Mrs. Anderson was right. Mrs. Balfour

and her brother came to call that afternoon, and Mrs. Balfour asked for Carlotta, on which a message was sent for Miss Figueiras to come into the garden to see some visitors, and Carlotta came at once. Her aunt looked severely at her, so Carlotta slunk away from her, and began picking dead flowers off some rosebushes near at hand. Prince Vladimir watched her as she did so, unconsciously finding a pleasure in contemplating the graceful curve of her figure, and the pretty movements of her brown taper fingers. All that he was conscious of observing, however, was that she had been crying.

"Poor women!" said he to himself; "their lot is very hard." But he wondered a little what this pretty young girl could have to distress her so much. This was the second time he had seen her, and both times so unhappy.

Poor Mrs. Balfour was greatly puzzled to know what to do with her brother, now that she had got him to England to be with her. She had recollected the brother she had lost all those years before, and looked forward to a real living brother of flesh and blood. In exchange, she seemed to herself to have received a phantom. All her usual habits had been overturned by his arrival; her husband barely spoke French, so could not take him off her hands, and she did not know what to do with him. It is all very well to sit with a phantom by one's own fireside—many people do that every night of their lives—but it is hardly *comme il faut* to take a phantom to flower-shows at the Horticultural, even when one is a season ticket-holder, nor does such companionship at all add liveliness to a visit to the Academy.

Now Mrs. Balfour was very fond of the Horticultural; she considered that and the Row the two most Russian places in London, not excepting the little chapel in Welbeck Street, which she still occasionally visited, more for auld lang syne's sake than anything else; for she had found it more convenient to join the Church of England on marrying an English husband and settling in England. But she felt it was impossible to take the tall gaunt man, with cavernous eyes, and red rough hands, innocent of gloves for the last twenty years, and scarred with much rough manual work, either to walk in the Row, or in the Gardens, when the band was playing there, and all the plants standing tied up in pots, looking as if they had just had their hair done, and put on their best ball dresses. As a general thing she felt it would be intolerable to him to pay calls, and so she did not know what to do with

him; for she could not be content to let him sit alone and think, which was the only pastime he ever seemed to originate for himself. But she had noticed that he had appeared attracted by Carlotta at her party, so the idea occurred to her to take him to call at the Maples, and to ask for Carlotta.

"Possibly," thought Mrs. Balfour, "she reminds him of his wife, who was not seventeen when he left her. I do not recollect her well, but they always said she was very childish. This girl seems very childish also."

So Carlotta came down from her banishment, which was mostly voluntary, to entertain the man who had been banished for twenty years, and not at all voluntarily, and felt very shy, and began to pick off dead roses; but after a little, by mistake, picked a live one, and tried to kick it away with her foot, looking very frightened as

she did so. Her aunt was particular about her flowers, and she did not wish to get into any further disgrace. Prince Vladimir stepped forward, and picked it up; if anyone noticed the rose, it would look as if he had gathered it now, and Mrs. Anderson did notice it, and thought so.

"Charlotte, take the Prince to see the hothouses," she said. "I see he is fond of flowers."

So Carlotta walked away with Prince Vladimir, and was soon visible in the distance, engaged in animated conversation with him.

"What can she find to say to him?" thought Mrs. Anderson. "She never seems to me to have an idea in her head."

But as they came back from the hothouses, it was evidently Prince Vladimir who was talking to her at great length, and Carlotta was gazing at him, and listen-

ing to him much as she listened to the priest in church.

Mrs. Balfour looked at her enviously. "How can she make him talk to her like that?" she said. "I've never been able to make him talk like that. How I wish you would lend her to me for a few days. It might bring him to life."

"I should be very glad to lend her to anyone for a few days, only she is so foolish, I am afraid she would get into mischief."

"She couldn't with him. He is like one of the Martyrs—so good," said his sister, enthusiastically. "And there'll be no other men about the house. You find it dangerous, because she is so pretty."

"I cannot say I think her pretty myself. I like a face with some expression and some intellect."

"Ah, intellect! perhaps not much," but Mrs. Balfour secretly wondered how

Mrs. Anderson could find her niece's face devoid of expression; however, she was eager now to settle that the little girl should come to stay with her, so she did not care to argue the point.

Hardly had the visitors gone away, before Carlotta turned to her aunt, and said in a great hurry, as if afraid she might lose the opportunity. "I was very angry, and I regret it. For whatever I may have said in my anger, I ask your pardon. I know that I have done very wrong to be angry."

"I am glad you have recovered your temper again," said Mrs. Anderson, quietly. "I knew it only required a little time. Now you had better go in and set your things in order, for Mrs. Balfour wants you to stay with her for a little, and I said you might go to-morrow. You had better give your muslin dresses to be ironed at once, and send directions to the

laundress to return any collars and sleeves you may require."

"Am I to go away in disgrace?" asked Carlotta, standing quite still, with her hands still folded before her, as she had placed them, while making her profession of sorrow.

"No, not in disgrace. Surely it will rather be a pleasure to you than otherwise to pay a visit to Mrs. Balfour. She is a remarkably agreeable woman, and has, like most Russians, such pleasing manners, that I should have thought you must have liked her."

"I do like her very much," said Carlotta. "But you have not given me your forgiveness yet."

"That is hardly necessary, I should think," said Mrs. Anderson. "You do not fancy, I hope, that I have been harbouring resentment against you in my heart, because of your childish fit of

temper last night. 'Let not the sun go down upon your wrath,' is a precept I should be sorry to have now to learn to follow. As to what is to be done about your remaining here, now that you have so far compromised yourself with Mr. Digby, that is a matter for mature deliberation, and I am the more glad of this visit to Mrs. Balfour, because it will afford me leisure to think it over. After what has occurred lately, I rely upon your being more circumspect in your conduct at all events for the next few days," and she went into the house.

Carlotta took one more turn to the greenhouse and back, before she went into the house also. The tears were running down her cheeks. "And she will not say she has forgiven me. She hates me!" said the poor child. "Oh, it is very, very hard to bear!" She was glad she was going away to stay with Mrs. Balfour, for

she felt as if she could not stay in the same house as her aunt much longer.

Even if Mrs. Anderson had noticed the somewhat French turn of the little sentence in which her niece had apologised to her, it would never have occurred to her as possible, that Carlotta had related the tale of her wrongs to Prince Vladimir, and that the little speech she had made was his composition; and even if she had known this, it would probably have made no difference in her intention to send Carlotta to stay with Mrs. Balfour. Carlotta had become an eyesore to her. Never before had she known her judgment called in question, as Jack called it in question, with reference to her treatment of this child, by whom she had really tried to do her duty according to her lights, expecting from the first no recompense, for she had never thought Carlotta capable of growing into a superior woman—the only womanly

development that found favour in her eyes. But she was herself disappointed at the little progress she had made. Carlotta seemed to her only to grow more bigotted.

To Mrs. Anderson, Roman Catholicism was all bigotry, partaking also of the nature of stupidity with an additional dash of sinfulness in it, seeing that it was at all events to a certain extent voluntary, whereas stupidity was not. To her it seemed almost like blasphemy to think it necessary to go to church every day, as if He who made the universe were confined to certain narrow spots in it, within temples made by hands, and not to be found everywhere by those who sought Him with undarkened minds. She had also that undefined suspicion of a pretty girl, that a woman advanced in years is sadly apt to entertain. Above all she was offended by the scandal that she feared, and by the disturbance that had already

taken place in the even ways of her well-regulated household.

It was about forty years since she had been young herself, and she had that belief in the superiority of men over women, that was an article of faith with sensible women in the days of her youth; and so of all her children Jack was perhaps her favourite, for Harry, though cleverer, was not loveable even in his mother's eyes, but now she felt that Jack misdoubted her for the first time in his life. Carlotta seemed like an apple of discord introduced into the household. It would be better to send her away. Mrs. Anderson meant still to do her duty by her; she would conscientiously look out the most trustworthy person of her acquaintance to take charge of her, but there was no reason, she thought, why she herself should have that burden; besides, she was perfectly well aware that Carlotta dis-

liked her, and looked with distrust on all advice that came from her. Thus it was in every way better to look for some one else, against whom the child was not prejudiced. In the meantime this visit to Mrs. Balfour came in very opportunely, it would give time. Only Jack rather shook his head, when he heard of the arrangement.

"Mrs. Balfour is a very pleasant person," he said, "but I cannot fancy she'll take the least care of Carlotta." However, he could think of no better plan to propose, and Carlotta herself seemed to like the arrangement, so he did not oppose it any further.

CHAPTER XIII.

Neither Margaret nor Susan knew any details about the meeting with Digby, Jack had wished that as few people as possible should know about it, and had spoken to his mother alone in the first instance, and both the sisters were far too *superior* to express any of the usual curiosity. They knew Carlotta had been naughty, and that was enough for them; Carlotta was of very little interest to either of them, and they were both much preoccupied at this time. Susan was making a profound study of Trades Unions, which as every one knows must be done

exhaustively to be of any use at all; she had also lately started an evening Course at which to teach young milliners the rudiments of Latin. It was not that they might learn Latin, she said, but for the sake of the mental training it would afford them. And in this way it really seemed very satisfactory, there did not appear any likelihood certainly of much Ciceronian composition being produced; but Susan's class was numerously and regularly attended, and as far as could be known the young milliners conducted themselves very properly. It certainly had not been very likely that those unsteadily disposed would be tempted to devote their spare time to acquiring a knowledge of a dead language, but yet as far as could be judged from results, Susan's class was very satisfactory, and highly creditable to her. She was herself very desirous eventually to prove that her

young milliners turned out better bonnets in consequence; but this hope she kept to herself, fearing it might be thought too ambitious; yet she felt certain that the thorough grounding she was giving them in one subject, must eventually make them more conscientious and exact in other things.

Margaret's attention was occupied in another way. The Course of Philosophy was now at an end, and there is not much use in a young lady's sitting down to study by herself the great questions, whether Space and Time exist outside herself, or are entirely subjective, and how far imagination fills up the otherwise yawning chasm between perception of the singular and conception in general; which chasm is necessarily called into existence as soon as it is once admitted, that knowledge consists in subsuming our intuitions under pure concepts, a theory for which

she as yet knew no substitute. There is not much use in sitting down to study these absorbing questions, which gain such an additional interest from the fact that no two learned men have ever yet wholly and entirely agreed about them, when running through the mind like a refrain is the question, Will *he* come to-night? She did not meet Mr. Hartnell so often, now that the Philosophy lectures were over. They had finished with that last grand lecture poor little Mrs. Digby had been waiting for all the time, but which she had been too weary and sick at heart to do more than jot down fragmentarily, with great dashes between the words to represent blanks where she had not taken in his meaning, being too much absorbed by what she had already heard. These were the fragments jotted down in her note-book: "The words Soul, God, Universe, &c., represent ideas not objects

such as nature and things of nature—undoubted thoughts, but things not objectively true. By them, as a natural outcome of human reason, we aspire ever and ever onwards on the path of phenomenal knowledge to see if we may not rise above it. By them it is always suggested to us that beyond phenomenal knowledge there is something for us to overcome. If any man says there is no mind, no universe (or orderly system of nature) no God; that man errs as much as he who says, he can rationally prove their existence . . . For Reason to prescribe moral laws, the existence of the Universe, of God, and the Soul are necessary postulates, without which morality cannot exist."

They comforted her somewhat these words, sounding grand and convincing while she listened to them. She was satisfied also now, that some people with the capacity to understand him had had

the moral courage to read Comte, and not to believe in his explanation of the universe; but the comfort this knowledge brought soon slipped away from her again. She had studied the Bible diligently of old, and she wanted more than it told her rather than less; still she was glad of this philosophical confirmation, such as it was, and it strengthened her faith, and deepened her comprehension of the sacred writings when she once more turned to them. But that was not for some time after, not till her husband had left her. To her intensely sympathetic nature even comfort was painful, when its source was closed to him whom she loved. Only when he left her, could she begin to read her Bible again.

Long before that last grand lecture Margaret Anderson had given up trying to persuade herself that she only cared for Mr. Hartnell, because he made the great

puzzles of philosophy clear to her, and had come to the conclusion that however it might be with men, philosophy was not enough quite to absorb a woman's attention. At the same time, she comforted herself with the idea that if she yielded, she had only done so when she had come in contact with a master intellect. Mr. Hartnell could take her mind, and twist it, and shape it which way he liked; no wonder she felt that it could only be safe in his keeping.

Besides, Margaret had other thoughts about Mr. Hartnell; she noticed that his coat was fast growing threadbare, and sometimes she wondered whether it would ever occur to him to buy a new one; she noticed also that he looked worn and hollow-eyed at times, and thought how good for him it would be, if he had somebody sometimes to remind him that there was a time for rest. Besides she was

sure that he felt very lonely. He had said as much to her once, referring to Johnson's youthful description of a man of letters: "To talk in private, to think in solitude, to inquire or to answer inquiries, is the business of a scholar. He wanders about the world without pomp or terror; and is neither known nor valued but by men like himself." Mr. Hartnell's deep sigh had not been lost upon Margaret, as he had said, "And if the man of letters feel that, what must not the student of philosophy feel? He meets so very few men like himself, and philosophy is still not only despised, but even suspected by the common herd. Sometimes I think I should like my divinity to be divine to all men, but of course that can never be attained till men are Godlike—that is never in this life."

They had gone on talking about the possible perfectibility of the human race,

as if nothing had happened, but that sigh had been treasured in Margaret's heart, and had found an answering chord there. The women who care about philosophy are still fewer than the men. And Margaret did really care about philosophy, and revered Mr. Hartnell as the man whom she believed to be the greatest philosopher of the day; but she loved him also as a man. And it was very natural that she should; there was nothing unloveable about Mr. Hartnell, unless it were his great absorption in philosophy, and she of all women could best overlook this.

He was a tall man, rather spare, and for an Englishman peculiarly supple in his movements, with grave dark eyes, beautiful for nothing but for the wealth of expression in them, a pale complexion, and an abundance of glossy curls, such as any girl who had cared for such things might have found fascinating. Margaret did not

care for such things, but she admired his curls secretly in her heart, though even to herself she gave more praise to the high white forehead over which they waved. There was something womanish about the curls, so fine and feathery; but about the forehead there was nothing womanish any more than about the nose, which precluded any claim Mr. Hartnell might otherwise have made to being called a handsome man, being cut short in rather a clumsy fashion, that gave an appearance of want of finish, though it began well enough, and was perfectly straight as long as it continued. His mouth was another weak point in Mr. Hartnell's face; it was the mouth of a man often in deep thought, and accustomed to press his lips tightly, not a beautiful mouth certainly. But whatever want of tenderness there might be about it was counteracted by the expression of his eyes, which were so very thoughtful

that one could not credit them with any want of feeling.

And Mr. Hartnell was not unfeeling, he had not been thrown so often and so much in Margaret Anderson's society, without learning to regard her a little differently from other women, if only from pure custom. She was no longer his most promising pupil, and nothing more, as he had at first considered her. She was the woman he thought of when he thought of a wife. And Mr. Hartnell thought of a wife oftener than his usual associates would have given him credit for doing. He would have liked to have a woman sitting opposite him during those long hours when he sat at home alone and studied; a woman who would not wish to distract him from his pursuits in order to admire her crochet, or some other trifle, but who would wait patiently till he had finished, being as much impressed with the importance of his re-

searches as he was himself; who would possibly even be able to appreciate the value of his results when he had attained to them. And Mr. Hartnell fully credited Margaret Anderson with this capability; he had a very high opinion of the intellect of women, even placed in comparison with that of men, and he considered her the most superior young woman of his acquaintance.

Susan he readily admitted had a greater capacity for hard work, but Margaret had more initiative, and a decidedly greater readiness to receive new ideas. Now Susan was rather too much given to not perceiving their originality at first, and referring to some half-forgotten man of note in the middle ages, who she asserted had entertained them. This Margaret never did, she always appreciated at once the novelty of an original idea. But in truth Mr. Hartnell's liking was not at all divided

between the two sisters. He had a great respect for Susan, but he did not care about her at all, and he did care about Margaret; she was the only woman of whom he could think as a possible wife, and he wanted a wife very sadly, though he often said he was wedded to philosophy. But to a man wedded to philosophy, what can be more revolting than those little annoyances of every-day life, trying enough to most bachelors who live in solitary lodgings, that their shirts are wearing out, and that joints of mutton disappear almost as soon as they are bought? Mr. Hartnell felt he absolutely required a well-ordered household, in order that his meditations might go on undisturbed. Now where could he find a better ordered house than the Maples? a girl brought up in that school must make a good wife.

But then there was an obstacle which had hitherto seemed insurmountable. Mr.

Hartnell was poor. However, it was not the idea of his poverty, and that first-rate servants and a good house require money, that hindered him; for like most men, he had a perfectly boundless idea of what good management could achieve. But it was the idea that he was poor, and that Margaret Anderson passed for an heiress at Clapham. Mr. Hartnell could not bear it to be thought that he was marrying a girl for her money, and yet he was perfectly aware that her money would be very convenient to him. Philosophy is not a paying subject, however pursued, and he would have been very glad to devote still less time to the paying part of it. Not that he wished to abandon the Lectures to ladies, they were a new thing, and a step in the right direction as he considered; he was willing to sacrifice some of his time to them. But the lectures to boys and young men, and the

occasional articles in quarterly reviews, all these he would have been very glad to curtail, if not to abandon completely; for he felt as if so much giving forth were sucking his mind dry at the very source, and he wanted not only more leisure, but more vigour to pursue his independent researches.

Margaret Anderson's money would enable him to do this, and his consciousness of this, and of its desirability, made him very doubtful even himself as to the sincerity of his attachment to her. Nevertheless Margaret's voice was the one he liked best to hear, and Margaret's face was to him the pleasantest to look upon, though even he did not call her pretty. There was certainly nothing of the syren about her, but this Mr. Hartnell looked upon as an advantage; he did not desire a wife so charming, that she would have been likely to lure him from his own particular pur-

suit. Truth was the game he intended to run down, and he did not wish to be distracted from it. Margaret would help him, he thought, could he ever make her his wife; but the question was whether he could ever honourably ask her in marriage, considering that he was poor, and she was rich, and that money had charms even for him, whom most people would have thought above anything so sordid. In his perplexity he absented himself from the Maples, and thus gave rise to the refrain that distracted Margaret from her studies. But after all, the bare fact of a woman being rich has not often hindered a man from seeking her society, though her being in the opposite position may often have done so. Mr. Hartnell came to the Maples again at last. It was the first evening after Carlotta had gone away, but he did not even notice her absence when he arrived after dinner.

Mr. Hartnell was the only frequent visitor at the Maples, who could not learn to respect its times and seasons. Susan was already gone out to her class, Harry had gone to pay an evening call, and Jack was walking in the garden with his mother, trying to make up for his almost open opposition in the matter of Carlotta, by now consulting her as to some rather knotty detail of business, about which she was, as he knew, quite capable to advise him, though she had never served any regular apprenticeship as he had done.

Thus Margaret was sitting alone in the drawing-room when he entered, and as she rose and held out her hand to him, she grew so very pink, that even he, generally too preoccupied to observe such things, could not fail to notice it; his perceptions being quickened by the consciousness, that he had rather kept away from the Maples of late.

It embarrassed him, even as he opened the conversation in what was certainly rather the style of a teacher of philosophy, than of a lover meeting with his lady love.

"You are looking into Spinoza I see. I am sorry for that. You will find it only embarrass you, his position that minds and bodies are but passing modes of the infinite attributes of the one substance is quite untenable."

"I suppose so," said Margaret, still quite unnecessarily pink, "but it is curious how we all wished to hear about Spinoza," by *all* she meant all the class. "We were quite disappointed that you barely touched upon his system."

"Were you? It was but the development of Cartesianism. I will explain it to you now briefly, if you like; but it is really a pity you should waste your time wading through his Ethica."

"Thank you," said Margaret, who some-

how did not feel inclined for an exposition of dogmatic Pantheism just then, feeling as she did, particularly conscious at the moment of the separate existence of individuals. "But I know how it wearies you, always—always having to explain. It is very hard upon you, that you can never meet with an equal mind, with which you could exchange ideas, not simply impart them."

"I suppose all men, who go deep into a subject, feel the same," said Mr. Hartnell, simply; "but that feeling of isolation never comes home to me when I am at the Maples."

He said the word lingeringly, as if he were fond of it, and looked round the room as he did so, his eye gradually becoming conscious of the different objects around him, all familiar to him, and somehow superior in his eyes to what he saw in any other drawing-room.

Margaret did not answer at once; she was generally ready enough to carry on the conversation, but this evening she did not seem equal to the occasion. There was silence between them, and each moment the silence became more embarrassing. It was at last almost impossible to break it. Mr. Hartnell looked at her; she was pinker than before, and looking down now, the hand that still held Spinoza's Thoughts trembling a little. On the spur of the moment, Mr. Hartnell spoke.

"Sometimes I have thought yours was a kindred mind," he said, taking her hand. "Would you grudge me to Philosophy, Margaret, if you were my wife?"

"Do you think I could possibly wish to separate you from the object of your life?" cried she, looking up, and speaking with enthusiasm. "If I thought I could advance knowledge one single step myself, I

would devote my whole life to it without a sigh. But, as it is, what better can I do than make it easier to you to do so? You must have many hindrances now."

"Indeed, I have," said Mr. Hartnell, dreamily; then, recollecting what had prevented his coming to the Maples of late, he added, quickly, "but you know I am a poor man; I have nothing to offer you, and I do not suppose I could ever grow rich, even if I tried."

"You are never likely to try," said Margaret, proudly. "Any man can gain money; it is not every man who can gain Truth. Besides, I have money of my own. I never cared about it before, but I do now. Thus you see you have given me the possession of it, in enabling me to enjoy it. The fruition of a thing is true possession, is it not?" she asked, smiling. She was in what to her represented the

seventh heaven. Hartnell's offer was perfect in her eyes. She would not have cared for him to make protestations of love to her; any ordinary man could do that. She was to be his wife—the wife of the greatest philosopher of the day, as she believed, mentally she now added of all future ages; but of course that was for future ages positively to decide, and Mr. Hartnell's system of philosophy was not yet revealed even to the present generation. It was not yet even matured. Indeed, it was to mature it that gaining Margaret as a wife would be so useful; he would obtain leisure in that way, and he would obtain one firm believer at all events. Thus it may be seen that Mr. Hartnell looked upon the taking to himself a wife purely selfishly, as men mostly do; he never once considered what Margaret would gain, but she was quite satisfied with her part of the bargain.

Mrs. Anderson was also quite satisfied, when her consent was asked later in the evening; she had been expecting Mr. Hartnell's offer for some time past now, and considered him a most desirable son-in-law, thinking more highly of him than of any other young man who came about the house. Indeed an advanced philosopher, and a firm believer in the fundamental doctrines of all Religion is not to be had every day, and Mrs. Anderson considered herself and Margaret fortunate. His want of money she looked upon as no obstacle, and she said at once she would help them with one or two additional hundreds a year, should Margaret's money not be found sufficient to establish them as Mr. Hartnell thought most desirable for his studies.

"That you must regulate entirely as you think fitting," said she. "For I am sure Margaret will like best whatever con-

duces to your comfort. But it is unfitting that a man of genius should be hampered by money cares; therefore, if there is any deficiency, I will supply it."

No wonder Mr. Hartnell thought himself fortunate in his mother-in-law, and he knew Mrs. Anderson well enough to feel sure that she would keep her word, and not interfere in the application of her money. There are not many women of whom this could be felt with equal confidence, but Mrs. Anderson was exceptional, and Margaret was exceptional also. Mr. Hartnell left the Maples a very happy man that night.

As to Margaret, she leant out of her window before going to bed, and meditated vaguely upon the immensity and mystery of the universe, as she gazed upward at the countless multitude of stars. In the presence of such vastness, it seemed additionally wonderful to her that her youthful dreams were about to be thus perfectly

realised. Next to being a philosopher, surely the very best thing would be to be the wife of one; possibly, for a woman, that was the very best thing. For Margaret did not feel quite sure whether a woman could ever have the physical strength necessary for such abstruse studies as Philosophy entailed; of course, mentally, she was quite man's equal. Margaret's youth had been passed in the middle of the nineteenth century, not at the beginning, like her mother's; she had the ideas of the day as to the relations between men and women.

It is curious how it is always the ideas of a select few that stamp an age or place! Probably even in Athens, the immense majority cared more about their personal advancement than about hearing some new thing; certainly now not all those born in the nineteenth century hold those extreme opinions by which, notwithstanding, it will probably go down marked to posterity!

CHAPTER XIV.

It was like a different person from what she had been of late that Carlotta wandered through Mrs. Balfour's pretty drawing-rooms, arranged with Russian taste in addition to English comfort, and fascinating absolutely with ivy screens, and fern conservatory, and flowering plants, and piles of music, and negligé of newspapers, books, pictures, knick-knacks, fancy work, photographs all scattered about the tables, in an order that would have taxed the memory of Houdin himself to have recalled; but which in every detail responded to some

sentiment rather than reason in the breast of Mrs. Balfour herself. She always *felt* that this table must be pushed into that corner, that the curtains must be looped back so far and no further, and that to-day it was absolutely indispensable that a vase of hothouse flowers should adorn her ebony cabinet, or that the room would look *surchargé* with anything further in the way of ornament. Mrs. Balfour could not possibly have given any reason for her various arrangements, but she walked about the room like an artist composing a picture, or a Soyer devising a bill of fare, as she pushed about the tables, and dropped a *bonbonnière* either on this table or on that. And certainly the result was charming, one hardly fancied oneself in England, when one entered her suite of rooms; indeed, one could not fancy oneself in any country in particular, simply in the *salon* of a very charming woman.

But Prince Vladimir had been quite unaware of the prettiness of the rooms, till he saw Carlotta like a jewel set in this very fascinating setting. Mrs. Balfour herself was delighted to see how very pretty the little girl appeared in her rooms. She moved about looking exactly as if she were a picture in Giorgione's best style, stepped down from its Florentine frame upon the walls. And Carlotta moved very well, when it was only about a room or a garden; further than that she could not manage with grace, she was not a good walker. But she moved about a room very well, and the Prince Vladimir watched her with pleasure, as she glided about admiring with the enjoyment of a child all the little knick-knacks with which the room was almost, but not quite crowded. Mrs. Balfour had too much feeling for that.

But when Mrs. Balfour left the room,

Carlotta ceased from her inspection, and came and sat down on a low ottoman before the Prince, taking great care not to tumble her muslin dress as she did so; for Carlotta had always a great respect for her clothes, and a secret sentiment that she was something particularly fine in the way of feathers, if the bird itself were not worth much. Poor little bird! no attire that she could have put on would ever have distracted any man, who saw her, from looking at her face; only a milliner's soul could have considered the quantity and quality of her flounces when her pretty face was at the top of them.

"I said to the aunt what you told me," said Carlotta, in her pretty Portuguese French. She did not speak French so correctly as English; but she spoke it quite as easily, and liked it decidedly better. Somehow it recalled to her Madeira, and the convent with its high

stone walls, and bright flowers, and somewhat lax nuns, who made feather flowers and sweetmeats, and never hurt her even when they scolded their loudest. By some strange transformation that convent had become to Carlotta a sort of fairy bower, or peaceful haven, to which she might some day retire, though she was too young yet. Quite too young Carlotta thought, but she contemplated returning to it some day with a gentle pleasure. She had quite forgotten now how she had been used to long to get away, and to know something of the wickedness of that world which she had fancied so delightful. She did not think it so delightful now, nor its wickedness the best part of it.

Prince Vladimir was amused but delighted with this little girl, who came nestling up to him like some beautiful tame bird rather than like a young lady,

and who told him she had followed out his directions with the air of a good child, who confidently expects a reward, or at all events praise. He had not seen anything so bright and pretty since that day when he went out hunting years ago, and involuntarily he recalled his young wife, but he crushed that memory away as he answered, "Then you are at rest, feeling that you are not deserving of your own blame."

"But she would not even say that she forgave me. She hates me," persisted Carlotta.

"Do not say that," said the worn man beside her pleadingly, looking far away into the farthest corner of the room, and quite forgetting Carlotta as he spoke. "Consciously or unconsciously we each pursue our own advantage. Nature bids us do so, and if another come between us and our aim, naturally we seek to

brush that other aside even at the risk of causing great suffering; but that is not hate, it is self-love, the principle that God has implanted in each one of our hearts, in order for the preservation of the human race. To rebel against that tendency, is it not to rebel against God?"

"But it is not right to seek our own advantage," interrupted Carlotta speaking warmly, with the positiveness of youth. "I know some of the Saints have not even thought it right to ask anything of the good God, saying His will was theirs." She knew this, she who cried out at the least evil that befell her, and still turned and would always turn to her fellow-creatures hoping help.

"Can we any of us overcome our own nature sufficiently for that?" asked the man, who had worn himself out in the effort. "Does there not always remain in the secret corners of the heart a wish,

unexpressed perhaps, but equally revealed to the reader of all hearts? We may *believe* His direction is for our good, the trials He sends us but blessings in disguise, and that in the blighting of all our hopes lies in reality the attainment of our highest happiness. But in the abnegation of ourselves so that no hopes, no wishes remain, I do not believe, unless it is brought about by despair, and that is a deadly enemy, to wrestle against which and overcome it is worth while to live for many years. Despair I believe to be the one sin for which there is no forgiveness, it is Atheism in action. It were far better to give up the hope of immortality, than to give up the belief in Providence. The one is a future good, the other alone gives unity and purpose to the life we now lead. Did I believe that it was by the disposition of man that my life has been made what it has, could I have borne it

for all these years past? I am an old man now—though not in years—and I can but expect to live a little while, a nothing in comparison with that which is past, for my strength is gone, and my life is dying away. Would it have been worth while to bear the past pain for the sake of the passing pleasure which I may yet with difficulty obtain, before Death comes like a friend? But recognising the finger of God in all that is past, in each detail as in the whole, there is no room for despair. For despair cannot enter where perfect trust prevails, and so long as there is not despair there must, I think, be wishes or hopes of some kind only in submission to His will."

He had forgotten he was speaking to Carlotta, forgotten he was speaking at all; but wandered on expressing the thoughts pent up for years for want of someone to whom to utter them, and Carlotta, to

whom no one had ever talked without in a measure trying to adjust himself to her capacity, conceived on the instant an overweening respect for this man, as something altogether different from other men. She had understood something too of what he had said, and gathered that he had been tempted to despair. Her heart melted towards him, and her dark eyes glowed with gathering tears; she wondered also what wish he yet cherished in the secret corners of his heart, but her natural tact warned her not to ask; only childlike, and not having yet learned how little we can any of us do for one another, she longed to do something for him and to help him.

When Mrs. Balfour came back she found them both looking so grave, that she rallied her brother on his forgetfulness of his duty to entertain her little guest, and Prince Vladimir recalled to himself, said in his low soft tones, "She is not

ennuyée, she does not wish to be amused," as if he understood all about Carlotta and her wishes. Yet he rose and proceeded now to do the honours of his sister's house, with the courtly manner that had been habitual to him in his youth. And Carlotta, who had strong in her the Portuguese love of ceremony, and who had yet never met with anything but rough English politeness, felt on the sudden as if she were swimming, or floating in a purer, brighter atmosphere, where yet all was perfectly natural as well as delightful to her. But when Prince Vladimir, at his sister's request, handed to her one of those little knick-knacks, with which her tables abounded, that Carlotta might examine its details, she noticed suddenly how rough and gnarled his hands were, bearing traces of those deadly mines in which he had worked so long, and the contrast between them and the courtly

manner in which he stood before her, holding the little jewelled casket for her to admire, brought tears into the girl's eyes, and with her little plump hand she touched his coarse fingers almost reverentially as she handed the casket back to him.

But then it was time to dress for dinner, and when she came down Carlotta had to run the gauntlet of a series of compliments upon her toilette, such as she had never been exposed to before. Everything she had on was pronounced exquisite by Mrs. Balfour, even the very rose she had stuck in her hair seemed to have thereby gained something that made it superior to any rose in the garden. And as Mr. Balfour joined in his wife's little burst of compliments, adding to them that exaggeration that English people, who admire foreign manners, are so apt to assume, Carlotta was quite glad to escape and sit down beside Prince Vladimir, who

only looked his satisfaction, as he said gently: "To each dress she puts on she will add new grace, so we must not say too much about it."

There were one or two people at dinner that night, and Carlotta heard Mrs. Balfour say to one of the ladies after dinner: "My brother is quite *épris* of her already." Then she turned to Carlotta, and stroking her cheek, said playfully, "What charm have you got, little one, that you can make even Vladimir smile? But we need not ask, need we?"

Then Carlotta found herself in the position which a ball-room belle accepts so naturally, but which is often a little puzzling to a débutante, that before she has even found out that a gentleman is paying her any attention, everyone else accepts him as her acknowledged admirer and jests good-humouredly about it.

"Vladimir, come here. This is your

place," said Mrs. Balfour, rising and leaving the seat near Carlotta that he might occupy it.

"Prince Vladimir must choose the piece," said one of the ladies, when Carlotta afterwards was asked to play, and seemed a little doubtful about her répertoire. And Carlotta looking at him inquiringly, like a good child unsuspicious of any hidden meaning, Prince Vladimir of course came forward and selected a piece, and turned over the pages for her afterwards as she played. Now that he had once begun, it was very delightful to him to perform these and other such like offices for the pretty little girl; it brought back days long past with a freshness that surprised himself. He began to appreciate where he was, no longer in Siberia, but in perfumed drawing-rooms among fair women and free men, engrossing also the attention of about the prettiest little girl

he had ever seen. The position had its charms. There were no young men of the party that night, and no one disputed his appropriation of Carlotta; but they all looked their admiration of her, and applauded her playing, and declared their tea had never tasted so delicious, when Mrs. Balfour insisted that she should make it, and taught her to do so in the Russian fashion, and in fact treated her as the spoilt darling of their society, as amongst certain sets it is the fashion to treat a pretty girl, so long as it suits the convenience of all present. And Carlotta liked the admiration and the caresses, and looked all the prettier for them; but her dark eyes glanced up reverentially whenever Prince Vladimir spoke to her, and the compliments that he paid to her she treasured. All the rest were as nothing to her in comparison. She was so sorry for him, so very sorry for him. Who has

not seen a young girl shower caresses upon a little blind puppy, or an old lame charger?

Next day it was still the same, she was never absolutely alone with Prince Vladimir, but they had a good deal of *tête-à-tête* conversation even though others were by; and at last with a start, as it comes to most of us with a start at last, and we wonder it has not come sooner, she awoke to the consciousness that she had a mind, and that she was ignorant. She had thought she was stupid before, Digby had told her so; but she had not sorrowed over it, as she sorrowed over it now at the same moment that she recognised that she was not utterly so. She understood nothing of all the subjects he talked about, so she made him tell her everything. Naturally he was of rather Republican tendencies, and he talked to her about the wrongs of humanity groaning under the oppressive

rule of autocrats, however beneficent. Carlotta had never thought about the subject before, but her sympathy with those who groaned was only the readier in consequence, and her cheeks glowed, and her dark eyes glistened, till at last Prince Vladimir said, "But I am sorry I have talked to you of all this. You are too young, and it excites you too much, I see."

"Oh, no, tell me more—more," cried Carlotta. But then they were interrupted. There was a young Frenchman present, an attaché from the Embassy, and he did not understand the *ci-devant exilé*, as he called him, engrossing all the attention of the only young lady in the room.

"*Mais, dites donc, Mademoiselle, est-ce que vous arrangez les affairs de l'univers?*" asked he, throwing himself into his most fascinating attitude, and proceeding to rally her upon her "*grand air sérieux.*"

How Carlotta hated him for his interruption, and yet more as she noted the slightly vexed air with which Prince Vladimir turned away, becoming suddenly conscious of how different he himself was, as he looked at the young dandy, who appeared so very fitting a companion for Carlotta. The little girl herself did not think whether he were a fitting companion for her or not, she only hated him for interrupting them, and found out on the instant that she did not like French from Paris, but only when it was spoken with the soft Russian accent. Nevertheless, as they were the only two speaking French among the little society, that somehow was always reuniting in Mrs. Balfour's salons, it was difficult to exclude the young man altogether from their conversation, although Carlotta shrugged her shoulders with annoyance, and turned her great eyes imploringly on the Prince, entreating him to go on where they had been

cut short. But Prince Vladimir did not help her at all, he drew back at once, now that there was this new claimant upon her attention, and only sat silent, seeming a little amused by the young man's violent efforts to make her attend to him. She would not, she looked at Prince Vladimir, wondering what he was thinking of, answering the young Parisian so stupidly, he at last gave it up, somewhat after the fashion of the fox in the fable, pronouncing the grapes less sweet than they looked.

Then Carlotta turned again to Prince Vladimir, "Why is it the good God permits that there should be Kings and Emperors, if true happiness is only to be found in a Republic?"

"That is a hard question," said he, as if he admired her ingenuity in having thought of it, and Carlotta flushed up, and fancied for a moment that she was not perhaps so stupid after all. "But why

does any evil exist in the world? Should you, do you think, be what you are, had you never been tried? The highest virtues can only be called forth by the greatest trials, that is the sins of others. I often think that too great prosperity would have made me selfish. And that is the lowest sin. It is the distinction of man to think for others, not only for himself, though his animal nature is always again and again prompting him to do that in the first instance."

"It must be very difficult not to be selfish," said Carlotta thoughtfully.

"It must always be difficult entirely to eradicate any sin. Selfishness is above all the danger of those who live much alone. There is no sin of which I have a greater horror, because I have felt such great temptations towards it."

At once Prince Vladimir became the most unselfish, as well as the most sorely

tried of all Carlotta's acquaintance. But why describe the process by which the girl twined her sweet imaginings about him, and endowed him with every virtue? Do we not all know the process? Have we not all, at one time, idolised some one or other, some their mothers, some heroes in history or celebrities of the present day, some very every day men and women, of whom they have only recently made the acquaintance? Very few are those who go through life without indulging in a little of this kind of hero-worship. Only with some it lasts longer than others, and some give themselves up to it more intensely, some less. Carlotta was from the south, and she had southern blood in her veins.

But she could not hide from herself, that although Prince Vladimir had barely reached ordinary middle age, he was yet old in more ways than one, older than many men who are what the world calls

quite, quite old. She sat by the window of her room one evening, and looked out into the garden instead of dressing for dinner, and thought of it all very calmly to outward seeming. She was pale for her, and very grave, as she thought there were Jack and Jessie, they both loved each other, and she thought they would be very happy together; they were very near each other's age, and though they were both older than she was, they might both be called young. Then there were Margaret and Mr. Hartnell—Carlotta's observant eyes had not been upon them for nothing, and she thought they were very likely to marry also, though she had not yet heard of their engagement. She supposed they would be happy also, though probably less happy than Jack and Jessie, at all events if happiness went by deserts. And they also were very nearly of an age, both young, though both older than herself.

Then her mind pictured to herself Prince Vladimir and herself, and she felt they were a very ill-assorted couple. Most people would say, she supposed, that she was too young and pretty for him, just as they said she was too young and pretty for a convent. But it did not matter at all she thought, though the tears came into her eyes, as a vision floated across her mind of how it would be to marry some one young and happy like Philip of long ago, who yet might perchance love her, and be as noble and good as Prince Vladimir. But that she felt was an impossibility, and she put the vision away from her. Prince Vladimir should have her youth and beauty, if he cared for them, and she thought he did care for them.

It could not be for nothing that he had more than once said to her, that the want of his life was a friend, *une amie*, as he had expressed himself; and Carlotta knew

enough of French to feel certain that *une amie* signified far more than the cold English translation. It could not be for nothing, that he had asked her for her photograph again and again, and that then, when she had at last given it to him very shyly, and fearful she might be doing wrong in so doing—it could not be for nothing that he had kissed it, as if it were the most natural thing in the world to do so, saying simply: "Since I may not kiss the original," glancing up at her, as he said so, so that Carlotta had grown crimson at the time, and grew crimson again at the recollection. No; he certainly thought that her companionship would sweeten his life, and if he thought so, Carlotta was quite content that it should be so sweetened. The world would call it a sacrifice, but she was quite ready to make that sacrifice for his sake. But how would it be, supposing she was mis-

taken, and he did not wish it? Carlotta got up from the window impatiently at this idea. Oh, then she supposed she should go back to the Maples, and she would really try then to grow wise like her cousins, so that he might be astonished, when he next met her, and talk more freely with her, and admire the pains she had taken. It all turned upon Prince Vladimir in the end, Carlotta's dream of the future; either she was to marry him at once, or she was to educate herself for his sake. But she had no time to think more then, she must dress for dinner. She was lengthy about her toilette at Mrs. Balfour's, it was so much commented upon afterwards, and it seemed to be a matter of such vital importance to everyone, whether she appeared in white with a crimson flower in her hair matching the colour in her cheeks, or all *couleur de rose*, whether she gathered her hair tight off her face, or encouraged it

to make little rings upon her forehead. Every detail was commented upon as of importance, therefore it had to be considered seriously beforehand.

"Vladimir, what do you mean to do, when we go to the seaside?" asked his sister that night.

"I shall go to Switzerland."

"Switzerland! oh, how delightful! the lakes are a real Paradise, and so are the snow-covered mountains that look like fairies, and turn all manner of colours in the evenings. As to those others with their solemn pines, and their quantities of rocks, my husband, like all Englishmen, delights in them, but I confess they give me the horrors. Will you not be very lonely there though?"

"No," replied her brother. Then pausing to interchange a smile of mutual understanding with Carlotta, whose dark eyes were gazing very earnestly at him,

"There is a large society of Russians there. And I carry with me such sweet memories," he added, bowing politely to the little girl.

So he did not mean her to go with him; Carlotta had almost thought he must at first, and she began to entertain a feeling of jealousy towards the beautiful lakes and fairy mountains, that were to take him from her for a time; but he would carry her memory with him, he had said. Yet now that she was sitting in the same room with him, the little girl felt differently towards him. It was impossible that one so good and noble could care for her; she thought now, however, it did not matter, her whole life should be consecrated to him just the same; she would never care for anyone else, having once known him, and she would try all she could to grow wiser and better, so that people seeing her might know she had

once come in contact with a man different from other men. They were strange thoughts to come into little Carlotta's head.

And meanwhile Prince Vladimir, who had been so long accustomed to contemplate the grand spectacle of life as from the topmost verge of the highest gallery, could not possibly have believed that anyone took him for one of the actors playing a part upon the stage. If anyone had told him that Carlotta cared for him, his whole nature would have cried out against it as an outrage; she was lovely, she was charming, she was the most perfectly simple, guileless little creature that could be imagined. It would be a crime like murder to think of marrying her to a man like himself, whose life had been crushed out of him long ago, who had no heart to give her in exchange for hers so warm and loving. No, she must marry

some man brave and able to protect her, but young and loving like herself. So he would have said, but I do not think he would have liked to see that man just then. It is one thing to refuse to pluck a lovely flower oneself, it is another thing to stand aside, and patiently see it appropriated by a passer by. If Prince Vladimir had made the acquaintance of Carlotta, engaged to another man, he would not in any important respects have acted differently towards her; but it would have tried him a good deal to see another man becoming engaged to her now. However he was spared that trial.

CHAPTER XV.

"CARLOTTA does not seem to have enjoyed her visit much," said Margaret Anderson, when her cousin returned from Mrs. Balfour's.

"No; I don't know what has come to her," said Jack. "I never saw her so shut up in herself. She is generally such a little chatterbox, and now she does not seem to have a word to say."

Carlotta had been driven home by Mrs. Balfour and Prince Vladimir, the latter had got out of the carriage and helped her out with that grandly courteous manner, which had an additional charm as being

so unexpected from him. He had even shaken hands with her, though he was too thoroughly Russian to be accustomed to shaking hands with ladies, and had done so awkwardly. Beyond that he had said nothing further than *adieu*. *Au revoir* would have sounded so much sweeter in Carlotta's ears! and yet only a few minutes before he had seemed to imply that they should meet again. His sister, referring to Carlotta's approaching departure for Leamington in order to be present at Jack's wedding, and her own intended trip to the seaside, and her brother's proposed journey to Switzerland, had said half sentimentally.

"I wonder when we shall meet again? Never, I am afraid."

"Ah!" said Prince Vladimir deprecatingly. "Mountains do not meet one another, but we are not mountains."

"It will never be the same again

though," said Carlotta almost with a sob.

"No; never the same again," said he sadly. "Things never repeat themselves. Perhaps it were better not to meet again," and a cloud fell over him so very gloomy, that though its very sadness carried comfort to Carlotta, his sister hastened to try to dispel it.

"Our *salon* will look quite sad without Carlotta to-morrow, will it not?" she asked lightly, caressing the little girl's hand as she spoke.

"Yes; so sad, that I think I shall leave for Switzerland to-morrow. I cannot bear haunted rooms. We are going to the play to-night, are not we?"

"Yes; but that will be too bad to leave me all alone," said his sister, and then they arrived at the door of the Maples, and Prince Vladimir helped Carlotta to get out, and said *adieu* not *au revoir*, and Carlotta looked up at him for the tenth

part of an instant with an expression that puzzled him at the moment, and then went on into the house without daring once to look back; but swallowed a tear or two, as she walked upstairs and answered rather monosyllabically, when she entered the drawing-room, and was asked how she liked her visit.

Indeed, she was so grave all that evening, that Mrs. Anderson even said to her, "Charlotte, my dear, if anything has happened to you, it would be better if you were to tell me. Perhaps I might be able to help you."

"Nothing has happened to me," said Carlotta; but she felt even then that if it had been possible for her aunt to take her in her arms and kiss her, she would have told her all about Prince Vladimir, and why she was so miserable. But of course it was not possible for her aunt to do anything of the kind.

Jack also made his little attempt at consolation. He sauntered in from the garden, and sat down beside Carlotta on the sofa, and spoke to her in what he intended for a cheering tone, though he was himself very grave and preoccupied with the thoughts of his approaching wedding, for it was very near now, and seemed to him to have grown very solemn in its nearness, and altogether different from an engagement. For there were so many homesteads where all did not seem to be so harmonious as had probably been anticipated at the outset, and Jack did so earnestly desire to make Jessie happy, and feared that the life of a business man's wife was very lonely, and that she would be dull without Priscilla. He had been a long time without seeing Jessie now, working very hard in order to have an entire holiday for a little with her, and he felt a great longing to be with her now;

but he would in his secret soul very gladly have dispensed with great part of the wedding ceremonies that were in store for him. He knew old Mr. and Mrs. Blackburn would cry, and no end of foolish jokes would be made, and he would have to return thanks for Jessie and himself at the wedding breakfast. He would much rather have dispensed with all this, and the idea of the approaching wedding was very distasteful to him, though his marriage appeared more desirable than ever, only a little solemn for its nearness, so that it was rather an effort to him to speak lightly. However, he exerted himself for Carlotta's sake, and not being able quite to turn away his thoughts from the subject that was uppermost in them, said, in as cheerful a tone as he could muster,

"Well, you will soon have a married cousin, Carlotta. Do you think that will be as nice as a single one?"

"I hope you and Jessie will be *very* happy," said Carlotta, without answering, and speaking with such earnestness, that Jack pressed her hand in gratitude, as he said:

"Thank you, Carlotta. I hope indeed I may make Jessie happy."

"She will be very happy," said Carlotta, raising her head, and nodding it in the way that was habitual to her when she was certain of anything. "She loves you very much, and now all her duty will be to make you happy. There can be nothing pleasanter than that, to bring about the happiness of one one loves."

Jack was startled; but after all he was only a man, so he did not at once guess what had led to this rather unusually thoughtful speech on Carlotta's part; and, indeed, it would have been peculiarly difficult for him, for he thought her such a dear little thing, he could not possibly have

fancied her caring for any one who did not care for her, though she was not at all like Jessie, consequently not at all like his ideal wife. But he was distressed by the sorrowful tone in which she spoke, so he said sadly,

"I see you are miserable at coming back to the Maples, and, poor child, I don't wonder. I wish I could think of some place where you would be happier. If it were only next year, I would ask you to stay with me and Jessie, but now it wouldn't do." He spoke decidedly.

"It is all the same to me where I am," said Carlotta, longing to thank him, but lacking energy, though she could not help thinking that there never was such a kind heart as that of her cousin Jack.

"You see, you'll be marrying one of these days," said Jack, whose thoughts harped upon one subject.

"No, I shall never marry," said Car-

lotta, decidedly. "But when I am older, I shall go into a convent."

"Oh, nonsense!" said Jack; but at that moment he was cut short by his mother's voice from the further end of the room, where she was sitting reading in the twilight.

"Charlotte," said Mrs. Anderson in her most severe tones, "come here, and tell me what is the meaning of all this."

Carlotta advanced, and took the book from her aunt's hand; and, half out of curiosity, and half to shield her from his mother's impending anger, Jack Anderson advanced also, and passing his arm round Carlotta, read over her shoulder Digby's little poem. Possibly he was a slower reader than Carlotta, or did not understand so quickly, for he had not quite finished the poem, when the girl turned round upon him with an expression he could never forget again. The next mo-

ment she had hidden her face upon his shoulder, and was shaking him with the violence of her sobs.

"Carlotta, darling, do not think he meant it!" cried Jack, at once understanding her feeling, and losing for the moment all resentment against Digby in his desire to comfort her. "When men like that write love-songs, they do not mean half they say. My dear, dear little girl, you must not really—you must not."

But Carlotta had become hysterical, and Mrs. Anderson, in tones which her son thought horribly stern, was telling the little girl to compose herself, and making her lie down on the sofa, and ordering her to be quiet. Jack, like most men, had a profound contempt for hysterics in theory, but in practice they made a great impression upon him, when on this, the first occasion, he came in contact with them. However, he felt profoundly ignorant, and

he saw that his mother's treatment, was having the desired effect.

"Poor child!" said Mrs. Anderson, at last, in quite a kind tone, seeing that Carlotta was now reduced to lying still with tear-stained eyes fixed upon Jack's face, and only trembling occasionally, "you will be better presently. Here, Jack, fetch her a warm shawl and some wine. The poor child is quite cold."

Carlotta even was surprised at the kindness of her aunt's tone; she began to have a glimmering that Mrs. Anderson might perhaps be ready to *do* anything for her, did she see her requiring anything. But Jack felt still a little resentful against his mother.

"How could you show her that poem?" he asked, in an undertone, as he came back with the wine and shawl. "She will never forget it now."

"I know you always think everything I

do unkindly meant with regard to that girl," said Mrs. Anderson, moving away with much repressed indignation in her voice.

"Oh no, mother, I never thought that," cried Jack, at once leaving Carlotta, and following her. "I never thought you meant anything unkindly, however it might appear. Only the poor little thing will be wretched now."

"Yes, I see she must go away," said Mrs. Anderson, decidedly. "She will never be happy here. Go and sit with her now, Jack; you understand her better than I do. Only do not talk to her, mind; she ought to be kept quite quiet."

So Jack went and sat down beside Carlotta, feeling very much ashamed of the way in which he had spoken to his mother, all the more so, because she had answered him so humbly, going away into the garden, as if she knew she was in the way.

But as he was not to talk to Carlotta, he took up a book and began reading. After some time he looked up. Carlotta was watching him with weary, half-closed eyes, but she opened them now, as she asked very low and hurriedly:

"Cousin Jack, do you think men ever feel like that?"

"Yes, I suppose so," said Jack, hesitatingly. It was a pretty little poem enough, not at all a passionate love-song, he thought; but, after all, he had only read it very hurriedly, and he could not quite tell to what part of it Carlotta might be referring. "But you see," he added, "if Digby"—he had some difficulty in saying the name, but he thought it, on the whole, better than any circumlocutory invective, which might possibly have provoked Carlotta—"if Digby had really meant it, he would either have sent it to you, or kept it in his desk. He would not have pub-

lished it for all the world to read, and where he must have known it was also most unlikely to meet your eye; for he must know you are not a great reader."

"I was not thinking of him," said Carlotta, half closing her eyes again, and seeming rather weary of his long speech. "But you think men do love like that sometimes—like women—really?"

"Yes, quite as really," said Jack, gravely. "Some people would say more; but I do not think there can be any more or less, where both love as much as they can. I hope it will be a very good man who will love you some day, and then you will know all about it."

"Oh, do not hope that, for I should never love him," said Carlotta.

"My dear little girl," began Jack; but Carlotta had composed herself to sleep now, as it appeared, so he went on reading his book.

CHAPTER XVI.

"ALWAYS advise energetic people not to do things, because they have such a particular capacity for inaction, and are so likely to follow your advice; and for the same reason, always advise lazy people to do something they have never thought of," cried Priscilla, appearing from her usual hiding-place among the bushes, where she seemed to delight to overhear what was said of her. "Another good rule is, if you wish to promote the harmony of a family, and have anything to object against the conduct of one member of it, always confide your objection to one of the

others. Of course it must be so particularly nice for Jessie to be requested to repeat to me all the numerous faults which the world detects in me, and which she is probably only too conscious of already. Oh, I have got an excellent table of rules for making life pleasant and comfortable. But those two are my last new additions."

"My dear Priscilla," cried Jessie, "are you quite mad to-day?"

"Why, even butter goes mad twice in the year," said Priscilla, unabashed. "And I was never made of food for babes. Besides, my dear Jess, when would you have me go mad, if not when my sole remaining sister is going to be married, and I am to be like the Last Rose of Summer 'left blooming alone?'"

"Perhaps it would be better not to go mad at all," said Mr. Palmer, curtly. "I certainly do think, Miss Priscilla, since you

are pleased always to overhear what I say of you, that it would be better if you were to keep a little quieter, and I should have said it to yourself if you had given me the opportunity, but you always rush headlong from one thing to another."

He had been a good deal put out by some trouble in the school, caused by Priscilla's mismanagement, and since she had answered him in rather an off-hand manner, and run away without listening to hear what it was exactly, he had been confiding his trouble to Jessie.

"What would you say if I were to preach you a sermon?" asked Priscilla.

"I should listen to it with more attention than you generally give mine."

"Don't be too sure of that. You're talking about unknown quantities," said she, with even more than her usual sharpness. "But now listen, for I am going to begin, and I take for my text: 'Look

at home.' Before you talk of my rushing from one thing to another, and never sitting still, I want to ask you if you ever sat still yourself."

"I am sure no one could accuse Mr. Palmer of rushing," interposed Jessie.

"Don't interfere, Jessie. I only ask you!" she continued, addressing Mr. Palmer. "Ah! I see, conscience is pricking you. I needn't say how I came by my information; but I heard all about your fainting-fit last Sunday, and if to save you a little trouble, I took things rather more on myself than I ought to have done at the school yesterday, and mismanaged accordingly, I can only say I am very sorry, but it was well intended, that's all," and Priscilla walked away, as if to conceal a little glisten in her eyes.

"Miss Priscilla, I am very sorry if I have vexed you. I am always so unfor-

tunate in that way," said Mr. Palmer, walking after her. "But if you only did everything out of your head in order to spare me, it was very kind of you; of course I am very much obliged to you, but——"

"But you wish I wouldn't again," said Priscilla laughing. "Come, I don't bear malice, I'll take your proffered hand. I mean figuratively, it is not necessary to do so really, I hope. Well, can you tell me anything I can do to set matters right? Shall I call upon all the mothers of all the children, and apologise generally?"

"No, I don't think that would do much good. I have been round and tried to explain matters. I think it would be better if you did nothing now, only kept away from the school for a little, till all is forgotten."

"Exactly. Always advise an energetic

person to do nothing," said Priscilla, biting her lip.

"If you only would do things a little more carefully," said the clergyman, seizing his opportunity on seeing her serious, "you do not know how much smoother everything would go, nor how much trouble and vexation you would save me, if you were so good as to think of that."

Priscilla was silent. And Mr. Palmer feared he had gone a little too far. He never thanked his coadjutors for what they did among the poor, feeling that the poor were not his property, and that what was done for them ought to be, even if it were not always done for a far Higher than himself; but he hastened to say now, "I hope you do not think because I speak in this way to you now, that I do not appreciate your ready willingness always to sacrifice yourself, where you can do your poorer neighbours a kindness. I know

how often it must be at the cost of your own inclinations."

"No, it is not," said Priscilla shortly. "I like parish work, and I should be miserable if it were taken away from me. So say what you like. Of course I know it must be done to please you, or there will be none for me to do."

Mr. Palmer looked too much annoyed to answer, and it was Carlotta who exclaimed, "Oh, Priscilla, why do you say such things to vex him."

"They do not vex him," cried Priscilla. "Nobody cares what I say."

"But perhaps he does," said Carlotta, coming forward and passing her arm through Priscilla's, "and think, Priscilla," she added, looking up into her face, "when he sits in the evening alone and miserable, one of your unkind words may come back and cause such sorrow."

"Mr. Palmer never is alone and miser-

able, you foolish child," said Priscilla, shaking her off and laughing. "At least I hope not. Carlotta, I wish you would go and see if they are never going to bring tea. She is a dear little thing," she added, as Carlotta hastened away, "but I don't know what they've done to her at Clapham, they've made her so grave. Fancy her talking like that when she was last here. I wish she'd marry somebody, I often think what a dear little wife she would make."

"I should not care for a wife like that," said Mr. Palmer, to whom this seemed to be thrown out as a suggestion. "It would be like having an easy-chair so comfortable that one would never have energy to go away to do one's work."

"Oh, as for you, you'd like nothing but a horsehair sofa which no one could possibly rest upon longer than was absolutely necessary. Well, I hope you may get

such a wife," said Priscilla, and walked off after Carlotta.

Everyone at Leamington was surprised at the change in the little girl, it was not that she looked unhappy exactly, but she was so very grave. Priscilla suggested once, that perhaps she found so much love-making oppressive. "I get tired sometimes of playing second fiddle to Jessie, and she is my sister, and Carlotta has to play second fiddle to Jessie and Margaret alternately. By the way, Jack, I've never heard your opinion of Margaret's lover. He is terribly learned, of course, but are you as well pleased with the engagement as the rest of the family?"

"I've no fault to find with Hartnell," replied Jack. "But though I am Margaret's brother, and so naturally not much prejudiced in her favour, I think she is worth at least half a man's heart. Now, Hartnell is given heart and soul to Philo-

sophy; however Margaret seems quite satisfied, so I do not know why anyone else should object."

It was in the last few days before the wedding that Margaret and Hartnell originated the idea, that as he was going abroad as usual for his vacation, it was a great pity that Harry should not take his sisters a little tour also, and that they should not all go together. Of course, they intended to go to Switzerland, the destination of nine-tenths of the English who go abroad in summer. Directly Carlotta heard this, she became restless. "I should so like to go too," said she to Priscilla.

"Why don't you ask them to take you, then? Here, Margaret, is little Carlotta breaking her heart to go to Switzerland also."

Margaret looked doubtful. Of course, she herself would be chiefly taken up with Hartnell, so it depended upon whether

Harry and Susan liked the addition of Carlotta.

"I'll write to my mother about it, Carlotta," said Jack. "If she says you are to go, it does not matter what the others think about it. But I don't know if you will like it. Why do you wish to go so much?"

"There are such beautiful lakes there, and mountains covered with snow like fairies," replied Carlotta, gravely.

"Are there?" said Jack, laughing. "Rather gigantic fairies, I should say. But it is a new thing for you to care about scenery, is it not?"

"There are a great many Russians there, and I like Russians."

"Better go to Russia for that. Besides, I can't say I know many Russians, but I never heard they made good friends. You'll find English people best in the long run, Carlotta."

"I haven't got any Russian friends, so that doesn't matter," said Carlotta, sadly. "They are nicest to talk to, I think." She could not think why Prince Vladimir had not made her his friend, since he had said he wanted one so much, and she had been so ready. But of one thing she felt quite certain, that they would meet again, if only she could go to Switzerland; and after all *perhaps* it would be just the same again, just as delightful as before. When Mrs. Anderson sent leave for her to go to Switzerland also, Carlotta became perfectly buoyant at the prospect. She determined at once to study very hard, till she met Prince Vladimir again, that he might be astonished by her progress; and as she knew he took so much interest in politics, she began to read the newspapers every day diligently. As to a volume of Russian history, that she found hidden away in a corner of a book-

shelf, she perfectly devoured it for his sake.

"You'll look after her a little, Harry," said Jack, before going away for his honeymoon. "You'll remember that she is not like Margaret or Susan, and that she is confoundedly pretty."

"I'll label her 'Glass with care,'" said Harry, provokingly. "It is really a pity you don't take her with you. I think if I were Jessie, I should be tempted to be jealous."

"Don't talk such nonsense," said Jack, indignantly. "I think I have even heard more bad jokes about falling in love and marrying than I expected to-day. I really think if I had known what I should have to go through, I should have shirked it at the last moment."

"You're like the young lady, who vowed she never would—no, she never would be married again, as she walked out of church on her bridegroom's arm.

I daresay Jessie will be just as glad that you don't care about going through the ceremony once more."

"For Heaven's sake, don't, Harry!" said Jack, impatiently. "Well, what is it, Carlotta?"

"I wanted to ask you," said Carlotta, shyly, "if it would be very inconvenient to take a picture away with you. It is the prettiest Saint I have got, and the only one that is framed. But it is not very big; and I should so like to give it to you, if it would not be in your way."

"It is very kind of you," said Jack, rather surprised. "But you have given me a present already."

"Yes, but that was only a bought one, out of a shop. I have had this picture a long time, and it is the only thing I have that I care about, so I should so like to give it to you."

Perhaps Jack was a little overcome by

all he had gone through that morning. Anyhow he was quite impatient with himself that he felt so choky, as he replied he was quite sure he could find room for it somewhere. It was a picture of Carlotta's favourite young Saint Stanislaus, which she had been used to think like Philip—though Heaven knows it was about as unlike him as one good-looking young man can well be to another—it went to her heart to give it away even now; but it really was the only thing she had that she cared for, and Carlotta saw no meaning in presents out of a shop, though, of course, she had followed the general example, and bought a joint one for Jack and his bride. The picture was to be for Jack all by himself, and she hoped it would bring him a special blessing from the Saint, though she was afraid to say so for fear of making him angry.

"Good-bye, Carlotta, and God bless

you," said Jack, after he had actually succeeded in finding a place for the picture in his portmanteau. "Now, mind you don't get into any fresh trouble, or if you do, write a long account of it to me or Jessie, quite at once. Promise me you will, child," and in all the fresh dignity of married life, he bent down and kissed her forehead.

To his distress, Carlotta began to cry. "You are the only person who are really good to me," she said.

Fortunately at this juncture Jessie appeared, coming along the passage in her travelling dress, and Jack appealed to her at once for assistance. "Oh, Jessie, what is to be done? Here is Carlotta crying, and I can't bear to leave her unhappy."

"What is the matter, Carlotta?" said Jessie, at once folding her in her arms, and kissing her in a gentle motherly

fashion, that sat very well upon the young wife. "You must not spoil my bridal day by being unhappy upon it."

"I am not unhappy," said Carlotta, resolutely, "and I am very glad you are married to Jack. I think it is very nice indeed, you are almost good enough for him. But I wish you were not going to take him away."

"Oh dear, dear!" said Jessie laughing. "But we shall come back some day, and then you shall come and stay with us, Carlotta, not just for a short visit, but for a long, long time; and then if you do not learn to think me quite as good as Jack, I shall be very angry—though it will be a great mistake if you do," she added, *sotto voce.*

By this time, Carlotta had begun to smile again, and Jack was smiling also, thinking very thankfully that he had got a treasure indeed in Jessie, and that she

certainly would prove all he had fancied. Thus smiling they hurried downstairs, and then there was such a quantity of kissing that Jack began again to object to weddings, and hardly knew where he was, till at last he found himself with Jessie driving away alone together.

CHAPTER XVII.

DIGBY with his usual unscrupulousness had written those two letters, that had appeared in the paper as, "From our Special Correspondent in Spain," before arriving there, and he was glad that he had done so, for he did not see much to alter when he did arrive, and he felt far too ill to have written anything so brilliant then. The long sleeplessness and opium taking were telling upon him severely at last, and he could not shake off the effects of Jack Anderson's blow. There had been a singing in his ears ever since. He took a walk in the sun on first landing, without

considering that the sun in Spain is slightly different from what it is in England, and without arming himself with an umbrella. The sun seemed to penetrate to the very marrow of his bones, his head ached, and he suffered from an unquenchable thirst. He went into a wine shop and drank off a glass or two hastily, then set off to walk home again through the sun.

No wonder he was almost struck down with sunstroke as he walked, and had barely strength left to stagger home, and fall down upon his bed in a heavy doze. When he awoke from that doze, he was in a raging fever. The attack was a bad one, and the report very easily reached England that he was dead. When last heard of he had been as bad as bad could be, and since then all the English residents had fled. If not dead, Digby would probably be murdered, it was supposed, and he was too ill to move, or to think of

moving. But Digby was not to die that time, he pulled through somehow; the attack was sharp but short, and while it was still believed at the newspaper office that he was dead, he was already on board a steamer slowly making his way home. He was not fit to travel, and he knew it, but during these last few days, when he had been getting better, an intolerable longing for Marian had seized him, and he could not rest without her. The loud voice and large black eyes of the kindly Spanish woman, who had nursed him, was simply hateful to him, as he thought of his wife's gentle dewy eyes, and her soft subdued tones. Besides he did not know what had happened to her; he knew he ought not to have left her, when he had done so, and he wondered how it might have gone with her, whether she would have been anxious at not hearing from him, or whether his treatment of her of late might

not really have crushed all love for him out of her heart. He longed to kneel beside her, and tell her it had not been himself that had been so hard and hateful, but some evil spirit, that had possessed him, and that he himself had always loved her, and always should, and how he had pined for her in Spain.

He had to change steamers at Bordeaux, he was not well enough yet for the land journey, so had settled to go on by sea; but he had hardly left Bordeaux before he regretted that he had not telegraphed to his wife from there. At the time, it had been anxiety for her that had prevented his doing so, thinking that she might be weak and ill, and that a telegram might alarm her. He had considered writing also and decided against it, because he could not get an answer. But no sooner had he put to sea again, than he regretted he had not telegraphed; he might

have got an answer then, and surely the excitement of receiving a telegram could not be as bad for her, as the anxiety about him, and Digby did not seriously think that she could care for him so little as not to be anxious about him any longer now. But it was too late then, and when he arrived in England, he thought it was not worth while, so it was quite unannounced that at last he drove up to his own door. He was alarmed to see that the shutters were closed, and that the house looked shut up; however, he supposed Marian had taken his advice, and gone to stay with her mother after all. But he knocked, prepared to hear disagreeable tidings.

It was a stranger who opened the door, a woman evidently put in to take care of the house while the owners were away. She did not know him of course, and replied, in answer to his cross examination

that Mrs. Digby had gone away the week before, she was still ill, but it was not for change; no, she believed there had been some difference with her husband, and he had gone away and treated her very badly, and she believed Mrs. Digby did not care to stay in his house any longer; her mother was with her, and that was her address now, if the gentleman wanted it. There had been "a great upset in the house, and, poor thing, it is a real mite of a baby, it is a wonder it lives at all. They had it christened directly it was born, they were so fearful."

So there was a baby, was there? Digby thanked the woman and drove away. When he leant back in the cab once more, he found himself thinking of the baby's christening rather than anything else, and of his own letters upon Baptismal Regeneration. He did not know what he thought about the subject now; but he

knew he was glad the child was christened if it were likely to die. At the same time he did not think much of a christening in a house, he determined he would take the baby to church the first possible opportunity. What good it would do, he did not know; but he hoped it would somehow bring a blessing and make the baby grow into a different sort of man from his father. After all he did not know it was a boy; but if it were a girl, why baptism might somehow develope out of it such a woman as Marian. Then the name recalled something else to Digby's thoughts, and he put his hand to his head and tried to think about the aching of it, and to exaggerate the pain it gave him, if only to still that other aching of his heart. But he longed more than ever to see Marian now, he felt sure he could explain everything to her if he could but see her. But

what could they have been telling her about him?

The address that had been given him was that of some lodgings at Clapham; he could see that they were lodgings directly he drove up to the door. He knocked, and was about to pass in at once, but the maid stopped him with a half frightened air.

"Mrs. Digby is much too ill to see anyone, Sir," she said.

"Is she very ill?" he asked.

"I don't rightly know, Sir. It seems as if she had something very bad on her mind, and she does take on dreadful."

Such a spasm passed across Digby's face, that it was hardly necessary for him to say, as he did quickly, "I am Mr. Digby. Ask Mrs. Kennedy to come and speak to me."

The maid showed him into a room on the ground floor, and there he waited

what seemed to him an age; but in truth he was greatly in awe of this coming interview with his mother-in-law. He had been put through an examination by her before she had entrusted to him her daughter; but then her wishes had been all enlisted on his side, she had been anxious that Marian should make what seemed such a good match, and her interrogatories had not been very searching. He had come out of it better than he had anticipated that time, but now he knew it would be very different, and Mrs. Kennedy was a woman any man might have been afraid of. She came in with Calvinism written upon her face, and gazed upon him as upon a vessel of wrath. Digby felt it; even in the midst of his anxiety about his wife, and what she might be feeling towards him, he could not help being impressed by the expression of his mother-in-law's face.

"We thought you were dead, Mr. Digby," said Mrs. Kennedy, speaking in slow awful tones, all the more terrible for their being so very low, that he had to strain his ears to catch them, though they were pitilessly distinct and measured at the same time. "I fear that it had been better for my poor child had it been so."

"How is she? How is Marian?" asked Digby, vainly trying to shake off the impression she had made upon him, and to look as if he had not observed that she had made no move to shake hands with him.

"She is perhaps no worse than might have been expected," said Mrs. Kennedy, speaking always in the same low awful tones. "Her state is still most precarious, but the doctor does not positively banish all hope of her recovery."

Digby did not speak. He had sat down

suddenly, and was leaning his elbows on the table, his face was hidden by his hands. After a moment or two he spoke, but he did not look up or remove his hands.

"You mean that she is dying?" he said. His voice sounded thin and weak, almost shrill, but there was no tremble in its distinctness.

Mrs. Kennedy noticed this, and in his clear tones read utter heartlessness. "If my child does not die it will not be your fault, Mr. Digby."

"Can I go up and see her now?" asked Digby, still in the same attitude.

"Go up and see her!" cried Mrs. Kennedy, startled from her composure. "Do you wish to kill her before my eyes? But you shall not. I am a poor weak woman," and she placed herself before the door, and looked anything but weak as she did so, "but I will call the whole street to

my assistance before I let you go upstairs and murder my daughter in cold blood, and it would be nothing short of murder for you to see her now. Why she believes you dead. I believed you to be dead myself a few minutes ago."

"She—she might be glad to hear I was alive," said Digby faintly, with a slight confusion in his utterance at the beginning. He had tried to say Marian, but could not.

"I trust that now that her eyes have been opened to the wickedness of your conduct, she will never desire to see or hear of you again," said Mrs. Kennedy firmly. "That is the best I can wish for my poor child now. God grant that her life may be spared, that she may have leisure to repent, for I fear you have led her far astray from the pure Gospel truth in which she was brought up. But if I thought that she was ever to live with

you as your wife again, I would rather see her in her grave. And after the way in which you have conducted yourself with that Miss Figueiras, there is, thank Heaven, no likelihood of that. Marian knows all about it now. I thought it my duty to tell her. And then after that I brought her away here, that she might not any more see anything that reminded her of you. She had sorrowed for your death at first. But now she feels with me, that it would be better you should be dead, that it would be better you had never existed. She had read that poem you had the shamelessness to publish with your name, and sorrowed over that before; but when she heard of your evening walks, and the fight with Mr. Anderson, and that Miss Figueiras——"

"I will not have her name mentioned," said Digby, suddenly sitting up, and throwing back his head with something of

his old gesture. "Say what you like of me, but there is no need to say anything of her—a child as innocent as the angels," he muttered half to himself.

"I have no wish to speak of her," said Mrs. Kennedy firmly. "I have no wish to speak evil of anyone, and I know no good of her. But I wish you once for all to understand, Mr. Digby, that though I shall think it my duty to acquaint my child with the fact of your existence at the first possible opportunity, fearing lest she should hear. of it from some chance person, it is my hope and my intention that she should never see you again."

"That will be for Marian to decide, I suppose," said Digby, and walked to the window. "In the meantime I trust that you will, as you say, take the first possible opportunity of acquainting my wife with the fact of my existence. You need not be afraid of my forcing myself upon her

unprepared. Her health is at least as precious to me as it can be to you, and I shall wait to see her till she herself bids me come. For the present, there does not seem any good in my remaining here."

And Mrs. Kennedy having quitted her guard over the door, he walked out of the room and left the house.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE next day he called again, and was told by the maid that Mrs. Digby had heard of his arrival, and had passed a very bad night in consequence. The doctor had said she must be perfectly quiet, and she could not possibly see him.

"Well, I suppose I can see the child," said Digby abruptly. He had forgotten to ask to see it the day before, but he had the feeling that it was a link between him and Marian, and that it might possibly bear some likeness to her. He knew it was often said to be only women, who could discover these likenesses in very

young infants, but he fancied that he had as delicate an organisation as any woman, and more imagination than most, and that he might be able to discover a resemblance hidden from the majority of masculine eyes. However, when the nurse at last brought down the baby into the dining-room for his inspection, he could discover no likeness at all in the very tiny representative of humanity that lay swathed in white, and making very ugly grimaces with its tiny red face.

"Is it a boy or a girl?" said Digby, trying to hide his disappointment.

"Why, bless your heart, Sir, it is a boy, and as like its father as it can stare, poor innocent," said the nurse, a comely fresh-complexioned woman with white hair, who eyed her tiny charge tenderly.

"I wish it had been like its mother instead," said Digby, with a sort of a groan, sinking down into a chair, and not

daring at first to touch the baby, but eyeing it with a slightly disdainful wonder, as to what could be the possible likeness to himself.

"It is a weakly baby now," said the nurse, "but it is not always the strongest babies grow into the strongest men. I daresay you was nothing so very big yourself, Sir, when you was a baby."

"I daresay not," said Digby absently. "I am afraid this child is very weakly though. See, he does not take hold of my hand at all when I hold it out to him. Most babies clutch at everything, and hold so very tight too."

"Bless you, Sir, he is too young for that. You'll see him clutching and holding if you have only patience; but the thing is, you're not accustomed to such young babies, Sir."

She was always being lost in wonderment at the extraordinary ignorance of

papas about babies, and generally regarded them rather as her special enemies; but this one had certainly been very little in her way so far, and her feelings were all the more mollified towards him by the present of gold he had thrust into her hand, feeling that it might be as well for him to secure at least one friend in the household.

"How is Mrs. Digby do you think?" he asked.

The nurse had already received the gold, and was feeling kindly towards him; she could not but be touched by the way in which he looked at her as he asked, looking as if he would give so much that she should answer quite differently from every one else. "Well, poor lady, she is not very much," said the nurse thoughtfully. "She did seem taking a turn for the better, but this last news of your coming back, Sir, has thrown her all into a flutter, and

I do think, Sir, she won't be any better till she has seen you now again. The doctor says as how she is to be kept very quiet, but there are different ways of keeping a body quiet, Sir."

"Yes," said Digby, disconsolately, and went away to come again the next day, and the day after again, and always to get the same answer, in Marian's name now, "Mrs. Digby could not see him, and did not know when she would be able."

If Digby had been more himself, he would have been angry, but he felt too ill to be angry now—too ill, and too miserable. He spent several hours one day, half crouching, half lying upon the gravestones of a desolate church-yard he had come upon in his ramblings, and he had caught a chill, and had shivering fits in consequence, and felt that old singing in his ears, and was troubled in his own mind sometimes as to whether he were sane or

not. That Marian should refuse to see him, because of anything that had ever passed between him and Carlotta, seemed such absurdity to him, that he thought one or both of them must be mad, and yet he could not be angry with her for acting thus. He had treated her so badly before going away, that he could not be angry with her for thinking anything of him. He could not be angry with her, but he said, "Poor Marian!" over and over again to himself, thinking what she must suffer in condemning him, and how he could not tell what extraordinary tales might not have been poured into her ears. Sometimes it even seemed to him that his last tender words to her, "I'll try to be a better husband when I come back," must have added their weight to the accusations against him.

And he was right. When her mother had retailed all she had heard against him,

it was the recollection of those words that had carried conviction to Marian's soul. She had resisted no longer then, but had believed all at once, all the more implicitly, because she had so long refused to believe anything, and had now no longer any confidence in her own judgment. Besides, she was very weak and ill, and her mother had shown her more clearly than she had ever realised it before, how, if Digby had been false to her, she had been yet falser to her God; and the poor child felt as if she had been wrong in everything, and her mother always right, and the only hope of safety lay in being guided by her mother.

Digby's intellect was regularly failing him under this protracted burden of sorrow and ill health, and one day, as he moved away from his wife's door, again refused admittance, he almost laughed to himself in his misery, as he thought that it was just at this hour Carlotta ought to be

going to the Roman Catholic Chapel, and that it was curious he had never met her, as his way crossed hers, and how it would be if he did meet her. At that very moment he discerned her well-known little figure coming down the street; in an instant he was by her side, and the start with which Carlotta shrunk away from him only drew one more line of pain in his face, and made him begin the more confusedly.

"I am not come to hurt you, child," he said; "but, Carlotta"—he was so used to calling her by her name, that he could not check himself even now, when he most wished to be respectful—"you used to tell me of the Saints, and of the angels, who were always ready to perform God's messages, or do any kind or charitable office. Is there none that will do a kind act for me now? My wife will not see me, or I could explain everything; but I go every day to

see her, and every day I am sent away. They have told her some falsehoods about you and about me. Why does not some angel go now to her, and tell her that I have never said anything to you, that she might not have heard herself, if she had wished."

"Would she believe it?" asked Carlotta, looking very frightened.

"No, perhaps not. I daresay not," said Digby, turning away again, and speaking languidly now, as if he had almost forgotten what they had been speaking about.

"You have been very ill," said Carlotta, looking at him with grave, observant eyes. "You have been *very* ill, or is it only that you are so miserable?"

"Miserable and ill, miserable and ill," repeated Digby, looking at her with a pained, far-away look in his eyes. "I beg your pardon for what I said to you just

now. Of course I ought never to have spoken to you, nor brought my own griefs near you. I have given you annoyance enough already by my folly, and I ought not to have let you know how much I myself suffer in consequence."

"I should like to do what I could for you," said Carlotta, simply, but very earnestly. "Do you think Jack would think it right for me to go and speak to Mrs. Digby?"

"No, of course not. He would think nothing right that had anything to do with me," said Digby, with a touch of his old bitterness. "You may tell your cousin that I carry the marks of his blow still with me, and that it will be thanks to him if I am never a sane man again."

"And it was all through me," said Carlotta, the tears starting to her eyes.

"No, it was not your fault at all," cried Digby, one of his better impulses urging

him to relieve her from the weight of self-reproach that he saw gathering over the pretty childish face. "Not in my worst moods have I ever blamed you. You were only a child, and acted like one."

"Tell me where she lives, that I may go and see her," said Carlotta, suddenly taking hold of his hand in her old childish fashion. "I can't help whether Jack would think it right or not, for he is married and far away, and I can't ask him. Only I must write and tell him about it afterwards. But I must go at once, for I start for Switzerland to-morrow;" and Carlotta's face suddenly broke into a bright sunny smile at the thought of Switzerland, and whom she expected to meet there. She expected it so confidently, without any thought of Switzerland being a large place. "Let me go at once," said Carlotta.

"I ought not to have said anything to you about it," said Digby, gloomily.

"But you have now; you cannot help it. I know how to help you, and I must try to do it. No one can say what you have said to me better than I can, and she must not believe anything bad of me—she must not." Carlotta broke off with a sort of gasp, and then began again more hurriedly. "Do you think the blessed St. Catherine, who let herself be broken upon the wheel, would ever have thought twice about doing such a little thing? If Mrs. Digby does not believe me, it will not hurt me, for I shall have spoken the truth. And I know she will believe me. I have seen her, and I love her, though I have never spoken to her. She has soft kind eyes."

"The sweetest eyes I ever saw," said Digby, brightening.

"You love her very much?" asked Carlotta.

"Love her!" cried Digby. "No one can know how much I love her."

There came a little shade over Carlotta's face, almost as if she were pained that he should love his wife so much, almost as if she were jealous. But Digby was not a vain man, and he did not fancy she was in love with himself, so he did not think she was jealous of his love for his wife, only he could not understand that expression.

"Which is the house?" asked Carlotta. Then suddenly looking round at him with an earnest, grave expression, "It is for love of the good God, I go," she said. Digby's eyes filled with tears, and he nodded silently to her, then walked away, after indicating the house. "You will wait for me?" said Carlotta, looking back alarmed.

"Oh, yes; I will wait for you. Ask her to see me; that is all I want. Only persuade her to see me. But how will you manage to see her?"

"The good God will help me," said Carlotta. She was not at all troubled about this difficulty herself, and when the door was opened to her, said, as if it were the most natural thing in the world, but yet in her most earnest tones, intensified by the idea of the coming interview, "I want to see Mrs. Digby. It is very important that I should see her, if only for a few minutes, and I go away to-morrow."

"Mrs. Digby is very ill; but I will ask," said the maid. "What name?" Then she went upstairs, and told Marian that Miss Figueiras wanted to see her very particularly. "And she seems such a nice young lady, I am sure it would do you good to see her, ma'am." Both servants were rather of the opinion that Mrs. Digby

wanted cheering more than anything else in the world. She used to lie on the sofa and cry nearly all day.

Marian's pale cheek flushed; she had a recollection of seeing Carlotta at the Andersons' dinner-party, and of thinking her very pretty and very foreign-looking. Like most English people, she was suspicious of any one who looked foreign, and this had made her the more ready to believe what she had been told about her husband. But Carlotta had been talking to him the only time she had seen her. Carlotta was altogether mixed up with him.

"Show her up," said Mrs. Digby.

Her mother was away superintending the evening toilette of the baby. Poor Marian interested herself but little in her baby; the thought that his father had never seen him robbed him of almost all interest in her eyes. She was alone,

there was no one to hinder her, and Miss Figueiras wanted particularly to see her; her pride was up. She tried to sit up on the sofa, and the colour came into her cheeks in the effort; her eyes shone. Then the door opened, and Carlotta came in; she paused for a moment at the door, taking in that the other was ill, and not dressed; then she came forward, and bending down, took both Marian's hands in hers, as she pressed her lips, rosy with health and youth, against the other's flushed and wasted cheek.

"I am so sorry you are ill," she said, quickly, rather as if she were repeating a lesson by rote, and were afraid of forgetting it, unless she made haste about it; "and I am come to see you, because I hear they have told you wicked stories about me, and it is very unkind of them, and they are not true at all. You must believe me, that they are not true; and Mr. Digby

is miserable, and he loves you so much, and you will not see him, and he has been so ill."

"Who? Roscoe ill? I thought he was dead," said Marian, almost sobbing; "but I never knew he had been ill. Then that is why he did not write."

"I don't know," said Carlotta, pausing for a moment to kiss away, as it were, the rising sob. "But he looks so unhappy, and he is good a little, after all; he is sorry he is not better, and that is always the first thing. That is why he liked to talk to me, because I talked to him of the good God, who loves us so much even when we do not love Him, and of the blessed Saints, who did such great things for His sake; and I thought you would like it," said Carlotta, now on a sudden almost crying. "I have always loved you ever since I saw you at that dreadful Lecture, and you looked so sad, and so

kind. Why did you look so sad then?"

"I don't—I don't remember," said Marian, a little confused by the way in which Carlotta ran on. "But—but is my husband too ill, that he does not come to see me?"

"He does come. He comes every day," cried Carlotta eagerly, "and every day he is told that you will not see him, that you are angry, because—because of me," she added suddenly, hiding her face on Marian's shoulder. "And it is very wicked of them to say such things about me."

"Very wicked," said Marian softly. "But I should not have cared what they said, if I had known you before. I do not wonder my husband liked to talk to you now."

"Yes, he liked to *talk* to me," said Carlotta, looking up again now, and waving her hand with a sort of depreca-

tory gesture. "He says I am so stupid, and that I shall never be clever, and that it rests him. But I do think I shall be cleverer some day," said she, looking very grave now. "I mean to try very hard." Then throwing her arms round Marian, she asked. "Do you think anyone will ever love me then, as he loves you?"

"I am sure some one will, and a great deal better too," said Marian softly.

"I do not care about better. He says he loves you more than any one can know," said Carlotta, with her most emphatic emphasis. "And he says you have the sweetest eyes he ever saw, and he smiled so then, just as if he was seeing them. That was the only time he did smile though. He seems so very unhappy. May I not tell him to come at once to see you?"

"Yes—yes, tell him, please," said Marian faintly. "But first thank you

very much for coming to see me. I cannot thank you properly now, but I shall see you again, shall I not? We shall be friends now," and she detained Carlotta with her weak thin hand.

Then Carlotta looked very sad. "I should like to be your friend," she said simply, "I am not any body's friend now, and it seems so strange, every one wishes for friends, and I should be so glad. But I am going away now, and I don't know if I shall come back. I hope I shall not, for I do not love England."

"Do you not?" said Marian, "I am so sorry; but do not forget me quite, for I shall always think of you. I shall always be your friend as long as I live, whether I see you again or not. Will you tell Roscoe that I wish very much to see him? I never sent any message to say I was angry; but I am very sorry, and good-bye, and God bless you," and Marian

sank back exhausted on her cushions. She was very white, and looked as if she were going to faint; but Carlotta did not wait to revive her, she sped down the stairs and beckoned to Digby from the house door.

"She wants to see you very much, and she never was angry, and I love her so much," said Carlotta, "but make haste, for she looks very ill."

And Digby only wrung her hand, and hurried past her, and the next moment was in his wife's room, kneeling before her, as he had fancied himself with her arms round his neck. But no word passed between them, for Marian had fainted from the excitement.

She was very ill after that, and Digby nursed her night and day, and even melted Mrs. Kennedy's heart by his tenderness and endurance. Once Marian fell asleep with her cheek resting on his hand,

and he stood bending over her for hours afraid to move hand or foot lest he should wake her, till she at last moved in her sleep and released him. Then only, he fainted from the pain he had gone through in his enforced position, and after that his mother-in-law's heart was melted towards him. She never reproached him again, after she had that day bathed his forehead and made him lie down, and administered wine and nourishment to him. But Digby hardly noticed whether she reproached him or not, his one thought was Marian, and whether she would be spared to him; he felt he could not face life without her, and that were she taken from him it would be impossible for him ever to believe that there was a Creator, who was good as well as mighty. Till now, he had always dimly looked forward to believing this some day. But in the end she was spared to him, and at

last one day they talked over together their melancholy time of separation.

"How could you ever believe that I cared for any one else, Marian?" asked Digby, interlacing her thin fingers in his own, almost as thin and much more bony.

"I don't think I did believe it. I think I should have died if I had," said Marian slowly. "But it was very good of Miss Figueiras to come to see me that day."

"She is a very good little thing," said Digby looking down. "But, Marian, do you remember how perfect our life was to have been? What made it all go wrong? Sometimes I think it was because I expected too much of you, thinking that you were to make a man of me, and forgetting that we each have to work out our own salvation in fear and trembling."

Marian had never heard Digby quote the Bible before, except to deride it, and she looked up puzzled.

"Should you mind being very poor, Marian? Sometimes I have the feeling that if I never wrote a line again, I might some day *think* something."

"Let us try then," said Marian, "we can but try. It is God who gives us faith. I dare say it will do us both good to be poor for a little, and at all events I will try not to think every word you say must be true, just because you say it; for I know that it is not fair to lean altogether upon another person, it must wear them out in the end. No wonder you broke down under it, tired of supporting me."

But somehow, I think Marian made least progress in carrying out her resolution. She could not break with all her old life at once. Now Digby broke with all his, by taking his child himself to church to be publicly christened. After those celebrated papers of his on Baptismal Regeneration, no one could under-

stand this, and his old friends gave him up *en masse*, both the Infidels and the Evangelicals among them. Digby never had had any others among his friends, for he came of an evangelical family, and his own convictions or want of convictions had never qualified him for High Church society, though he had written for their periodicals; but those had been among his weaker efforts, containing as a rule only the arguments that he had himself bowled over in previous papers for the Opposition party. However, now he wrote no more, and his friends fell off from him.

Book II.

CARRIED BY THE CURRENT.

"If when in cheerless wanderings dull and cold,
A sense of human kindliness hath found us,
We seem to have around us,
An atmosphere all gold."

A. Clough.

CHAPTER I.

It is an old metaphor to compare life to a stream, that tinkles merrily at first, a little silver thread in happy childhood; then dashes against the stones and pebbles, and seeks sometimes to overspread its banks in riotous school-days. After that the stream is grown greater, and flows swiftly, borne along by its own force; then comes the cataract and the swift leap downwards, and the eddy back, that yet accomplishes nothing, for no stream can regain the heights once abandoned, though afterwards it may flow on, smooth and swiftly as before; or it may run

turbid and swollen with stones and mud, that it has carried away in its violence; or it may, yes, it may even become sluggish, and creep along a thing for weeds to grow upon, forgetful alike of its first bubbling spring, and its one wild passionate leap.

There are other streams, that are for ever leaping, plunging, and rushing downwards, then curving and flowing almost backwards, then leaping again and hurrying forwards, often in frantic haste, yet not achieving more than their quieter neighbours. But in England, nature does not deal much in cataracts, and it sometimes seems to me, that the lives of its inhabitants greatly resemble its rivers, often beneficent and fair to see, if one looks at them, but not challenging attention, nor crowded with incident; and hence perhaps that longing for sensation, that we all suffer under more or

less at one time or other of our lives. It is not when our own romances are acting, when our hearts are wrung with fear or fluttering with hope, that we turn to the melodramatic romance writer for relief; but rather when our life is too devoid of incident, happiness, or sorrow, not to be somewhat dull. It is dangerous for us then, when instead of the pages of the romance, which we turn over and as we say forget, we plunge without premeditation into such life as is led, where turbid Arno overflows all boundaries, or beneath "Heights which appear as lovers who have parted." There is a magnificent vegetation at the Tropics, but English turf and trees would be scorched if transplanted there.

When Carlotta once more saw mountains, and blue, intensely blue skies, and rosy oleanders bending under the weight of their own flowers, just as they had been

wont to bend in Madeira, only smaller, she began to feel as if the time she had spent in England had been but a dream. Here, there was Nature again, wild, natural, beautiful. Here, each day, she saw people with dark passionate eyes, or with merry kindly faces, such as she recollected in her childhood. She did not speak to them, for she and her cousins were always moving on, seeing some new thing every day, and the one thing her cousins were careful of, was that she should make no undesirable acquaintance; but Carlotta saw them, and she felt she should be at home with them, her real self again, not what she had been in England. For she had become almost a stranger to herself, so strongly rooted in the little girl was the desire for approbation, and such a strain had she put upon herself to win it, though so often unsuccessfully. Now, all those people whose approbation she had

tried to win, became as grey phantoms to her; even the priest, to whom she had confessed, seemed no longer real. He was quite different from the old Portuguese padre, who had so often blessed her as a child; quite different from the fervid French speaking curé, who now encouraged her in Switzerland.

The people she had known in England, even those whom she was now with, began to seem as little real to her, as she often appeared to them, for though they were never unkind to her, and looked after her luggage and her comfort as carefully as their own, yet the Andersons quite ignored Carlotta. Had she been a little dog travelling about with them, they could not have treated her as more absolutely mindless and soulless. Margaret and Susan had long ago given up trying to impregnate her with their superior enlightenment, so now they let her take her own course,

whilst they took theirs. Margaret was chiefly occupied with Hartnell. They talked together about Philosophy, as well as many other subjects, and looked into each other's innermost souls, and were quite indifferent whether Carlotta was with them or not; for indeed they knew she would be paying them no attention, and even had she done so, they thought so little of her, that they would not have minded being exposed to her powers of observation.

These three were generally left together, for they were none of them good walkers, though Carlotta was decidedly the worst, looking always inclined to cry, and pouting very sadly whenever she was obliged to overtire herself; whereas Harry and Susan were one about as indefatigable as the other, and did not seem even to feel the weight of the heavy geological hammers they carried with them, and the

variety of specimens they contrived to amass. So they generally went on long mountain excursions alone, whilst the others followed as far as horses or carriages could take them, though Margaret and Hartnell would sometimes walk on a little, whereas Carlotta always preferred to be left behind with the horses.

She was then supposed to be making additions to a collection of flowers she had begun on her travels, her cousins having persuaded her to do this, thinking it a nice improving amusement, to which she was just equal, and she generally had something of a nosegay to exhibit when the others returned, not having any objection at all to gathering flowers; but as she was often too lazy or tired to press them before they were dead, this gave her the opportunity of gathering the same kinds of flowers day after day without making her collection too bulky. In truth, Carlotta

was not so much gathering flowers as looking at the scenery around her, which she appreciated much more highly than did her cousins. To her it was like renewed life to sit with eyes brimming over, watching the Jungfrau flush a rosier, and a rosier red, till at last it faded away, pale and yet paler, till nothing was left but the cold grey mountain, standing ghostlike in the twilight; or to watch the mists creeping over the mountains, or the waterfalls leaping from the crags, or the lakes glittering in the sunshine, and to be so absorbed in simple admiration as not to find the hours pass wearily, though she often wished she had some one to share her feelings with her.

Then her thoughts would revert to Prince Vladimir, he was the only person who still seemed real to her, and yet he had become very ideal indeed. Carlotta was always quite sure that he would

admire everything that she admired, and each beautiful view that she saw she used to wonder if he had seen also, and half to hope he had not; because then it would be so delightful to bring him to see it, when they next met again, and half to wish he had, because then it would be so much more charming to herself to sit and look at it, thinking he had sat there before and looked at it also.

Poor little Carlotta! many a stranger carried away her pretty child's face in his heart, to be stored up with other articles of uncertain value, but to be looked at again some day when an electric chord should be struck, recalling the young girl with the pretty rounded figure and dark glowing eyes, and cheeks that seemed to gather warmth from those eyes. She was like a picture moving about in those stately Swiss hotels, or sitting alone in her Alpine solitudes; and she was like a

picture in her silence too, for neither thought nor feeling did she ever express to anyone; though sometimes she would ask Margaret if she should not carry a shawl for her, or thank Harry because he shortened her stirrup for her, and she always said "good morning," and "good night" to everyone every day.

It might appear strange that as Hartnell and Margaret reasoned so much about Soul and Spirit, and the seat of the affections, and that psychological *ego* about which nobody *knows* anything, nor ever can *know;* it might appear strange that it never occurred to them that this little girl might have something psychological about her also, though doubtless very different from what such intellectual people as themselves had. But indeed this is what occurs so often, that it would not even appear strange, did we not pause to think it over. How many people do

we not each of us meet in our life, whom we are content to treat day after day, and year after year as machines, nothing more! And yet they are men and women, like unto ourselves, did we only think of it.

Sometimes a little excitement was thrown into Carlotta's life by hearing Russian-French talked again; the long drawn out tones, soft, and melting into one another would cause her to look up, and she would expect to see Prince Vladimir; but she never saw him, nor heard of him, and at last her heart began to grow sick and weary, as she thought Switzerland was a very large place. There seemed to be no end to its mountains, and as far as she could make out there was a pass between each. One day, it was at Interlaken, she saw a Russian paper lying on the table amongst all the other newspapers that were becoming familiar to her by degrees, for she

tried hard to read them and understand them, recollecting what an interest Prince Vladimir had taken in politics, and wishing always to be more fitted to talk with him when they next should meet, whenever that might be.

She seized upon the Russian paper with such avidity, that one or two people looked up to see what the Picture Beauty, as some people called her, could be so excited about; but she soon saw she could not even tell by the shape of the letters, whether she were looking at them topsy turvy or not. So she laid it down very sadly again, feeling that were all other barriers overleapt, there would always remain one great barrier between her and Prince Vladimir, for she felt sure she could never learn his language.

It was becoming time for Hartnell to return home again, but Margaret had proved herself so weak during their mountain excursions, and had so knocked her-

self up by once or twice undertaking more than she was equal to, that a doctor had been consulted, and he had pronounced that it was not so much want of strength as that her digestion was out of order, and strongly advised the grape cure; so that Harry, who was not sorry for an excuse for postponing that always very moveable pleasure of reading law, proposed that Susan, who was in a hurry to return to her young milliners and her Latin class, should travel home under Hartnell's escort, and that he should accompany the other two to the Lake of Geneva, where he could pursue his geological researches, and Margaret and Carlotta could eat grapes at their leisure. For as it was good for Margaret to eat grapes, he took for granted it would be good for Carlotta also, Carlotta being always treated by the whole party as a person with no individuality, whether physical or otherwise.

CHAPTER II.

Thus it came to pass that the little party diminished to three, established themselves at Vevey, and Margaret ate grapes and tried to sketch, and Carlotta actually tried to sketch also, and was almost happy, because there seemed to be a great many Russians at Vevey, and she hoped some day to make friends with some of them, now that they were really to stay still at last. Then, perhaps, she might hear something of Prince Vladimir.

One of the Russian ladies was very beautiful indeed, and Margaret, who conversed herself quite freely with strangers

(actuated by the sensible idea that she might thus receive information), though she had up to this time always tried to prevent Carlotta from doing so, placing her in the middle of their hitherto long line at table-d'hôtes and other dangerous places, told Carlotta now that this lady was a celebrated beauty both at Vienna and Paris, as well as at Petersburg; and that it was at Paris that she was said to have turned every one's head, till at last she lost her own, having had violent brain fever, and that it was supposed she was only recovering now, and still travelling for her health.

Carlotta did not like the green gleam in her eyes, but when Margaret, who was up in the subject, explained that this was supposed to be one of her greatest charms, and that it was a Russian peculiarity; then Carlotta began to find it fascinating also, and was quite interested to hear that she

was the Princess Zabrowsky, and that that little man, with the light imperial and moustache, and slanting suspicious looking Tartar eyes, was her husband, and the other gentleman with them, a Baron von Wolff, though some people suspected him of being the Princess's keeper, because she was so very eccentric that they quite thought she required one.

It was at breakfast time that Margaret detailed all this rather gossiping information to Carlotta, actually condescending to talk to her, now that there was absolutely no one else to speak to; for Harry had gone off some hours before on a mountain expedition, and the two were sitting alone together at a little round table at one end of the magnificent table-d'hôte room, looking every now and then across at the Princess as she sat at another round table by herself, dipping her roll in her coffee. The Princess Zabrowsky attracted always

a good deal of attention by her appearance, but perhaps especially so in the morning, for one of her caprices was that she would come down to breakfast like an English woman, and would wear a *peignoir* like a French woman. So there she sat with her hair very elaborately done, and diamonds in her ears even at that hour of the morning, and a magnificent *peignoir* of cherry satin and white lace that left her beautiful arms bare to the elbow, and was by no means tight-fitting about the throat. And as she sat there, thus arrayed, in a pose any painter might have envied for his model, but to which very few painters have ever attained, so perfectly easy and graceful was it, she looked so very charming that it was only natural if people felt a little suspicious about her; for as every one knows it is not the least sweet peaches that the wasps taste first,

and it is not always the reddest apples are the best.

Long silky coils of hair were looped about her head in a perfectly new and original fashion, which the most approved coiffeur in Paris was only trying upon the Princess Zabrowsky, for those long tresses no longer grew upon her head, though they once had done so. There was also about the Princess, as she sat in the clear pitiless morning light, a suspicion of pearl powder, and of touching up about the eyes, quite sufficient to give rise to doubts in the minds of those that way inclined, even without considering the expression,

> "That soft betraying air
> That women loved, and flattered love to wear,"

and which the Princess wore eminently, as she sat slowly crumbling her roll and sipping her coffee. Even simple little Carlotta felt a sort of shrinking from this

beautiful lady of fashion, that made her pause and hesitate before passing near her, as Margaret, having finished her breakfast, prepared to do, announcing that she was going to finish her sketch of the little promontory of La Tour, which juts out so picturesquely just to the east of Vevey with its Castle, and its Tower, and poplars, that no sketcher can possibly resist attempting it, but which is yet a difficult subject enough, as many a pretty schoolroom dabbler has found to her cost.

However, Carlotta had no possible excuse for staying in the breakfast-room, having already appropriated the two lumps of sugar that she generally pilfered from the morning meal, so as Margaret had left the room she proceeded to do so also; but as she passed by the Princess Zabrowsky, she could not resist taking one more look at her, and as she did so, she met the Princess's eyes fixed full on her face with an amused

expression that quite puzzled the little girl, and made her again pause and hesitate.

"So you do not like my eyes," said the Princess, speaking perfect English, but with pure liquid tones such as are rarely to be heard among those English born. "You thought I did not hear, but I have been ill, and since then I hear every thing. Besides, very likely you thought I did not understand English, and as it happens it was the first language I ever spoke. I thought of warning you once or twice, but it was too much trouble, and your good gouvernante spoke with so much precision, it was quite delightful to hear her. Ah, *je raffole des Anglaises!*—they are so original, they do things no one else does, and they hold up their hands at foreigners. Oh shocking! shocking!" and the Princess laughed a mechanical drawing-room laugh, with as little merriment in it as laugh could possibly have. It might have been

a merry laugh once, but if so, then it was the skeleton of what it had been, a skeleton, such as could make no one else inclined to laugh also. Carlotta looked even graver than before. "There you are frightened, poor child. I do not bear you malice," said the Princess, holding out a hand glistening with diamonds and other precious stones. "Give me an English *shake hands*, and let us be friends."

"I am not English," said Carlotta, drawing herself up a little proudly.

It had not escaped her that the Prince Vladimir, in speaking of the four great Races, among whom he opined that the world would ultimately be divided, had always classed together the French, Italians, Portuguese, and Spaniards, calling them collectively the Latin Races, as if they were not really one, but were yet none of them of sufficient importance to be able to stand alone. It had wounded

Carlotta's national pride, though she had never ventured to remonstrate; but since then, she had become decidedly more touchy about being Portuguese.

The Princess, however, was too excited to hear what Carlotta said, speaking, as she did, very shyly; she only noticed that Carlotta distinctly did not give an English shake of the hand, hardly venturing to touch the jewel-covered fingers with her own little brown ones. So she said, haughtily,

"Pardon. You are like all the English, I see. Somehow, I thought you were different, and seeing there was a crumple in your roseleaf somewhere, I thought perhaps you might feel friendly towards the rose that had been shattered. However, let us act according to the customs of your people, and *make* friends in the English fashion, that is, after a month in the same house together, let us find out that we

might have liked each other had we known each other sooner, and press hands sadly, after the manner of the English, and go each our way, never to meet again. *Voilà!* that is what we will do. But why, oh! why did Heaven put all the sweetness in your faces? and where, oh! where do you seek comfort in distress? Not in each other's friendship, I am sure."

"*Ah Deos!*" cried Carlotta, at last bursting into utterance. She had hitherto been hushed into silence by the torrent of the Princess's words. "I am not English, and I know nothing about the English people; they are strange, but—they are *good*," she said, spreading out her hands with much the same deprecatory gesture she had formerly used in speaking of the nuns. "Only I do not love them exactly; and I should so like to be your friend. As it is, I am nobody's friend, and I love all Russians."

"*Tiens!*" said the Princess. "Which in particular?"

"How do you mean?" asked Carlotta, not changing colour in the least, as she stared at the Princess with brown, saucer-like eyes. "I love them all. They all speak in the same tones, and mostly they look sad, and I know they are kind. I know you are kind, and I love you, because you say everything straight out at once. But I am very sorry if you heard what we were saying just now, if it gave you pain. Only it was no harm, only about your eyes, and I do like them now, because they are Russian, Margaret says."

"Why, you are a little angel!" cried the Princess, enthusiastically. "I am sure you are as pretty as one, and you are as simple as a baby."

But on this, to her surprise, Carlotta

hung her head, and looked intensely miserable.

"I have taken such pains," she said. "I have tried so hard. I have dried a quantity of flowers, and I know some of their names, and they said that was sensible; and I do read the *Times* every day—every day, only it is so long I cannot read all. But now you find me just as stupid as they all do. It is no use being pretty, if one is stupid."

"*Ma chère enfant!* it is the most delicious thing in the world," cried the Princess, drawing one of Carlotta's hands within hers, and caressing it. "I begin to be jealous of you already, for I know how all the men must adore you, and I like them to adore no one but me when I am there. Now we shall be rivals. How long do you stay?"

So then by degrees Carlotta was consoled, and though she would not at once

go up into the Princess's suite of rooms, as she was invited to do, fearing that Margaret might be displeased if she did so, it was not many days before she found herself there, and the intimacy progressed rapidly. The Princess would cover Carlotta with kisses whenever she saw her, and the girl who had been wholly shut up within herself for the last month and more, would have gladly confided much to her new friend, but that the Princess was fond of talking herself, and preferred confiding portions of her own history to a listener, who was always sympathising, and who had never the disagreeable appearance of making reflections of her own upon what she was told.

One day the Princess showed Carlotta the picture of a handsome young man, which she wore in the clasp of a bracelet.

"That is my guardian angel," she said. "You talk of yours. See mine. No, do

not show me the picture; I never look at it. He was taken away from me years ago, and I have never looked at his portrait since. But that bracelet never leaves my arm."

Carlotta felt puzzled. "It is not the picture of the Prince Zabrowsky," she thought; "it is a beautiful young face!" and following out the train of her own thoughts, she looked up and said, "But you loved the Prince Zabrowsky best when you married him?"

"Loved whom?" asked the Princess. "Loved the devil!" she almost shrieked. "No, I hated him, but not as I hate him now, with an intensity of hatred—" and she paused, and dashed her jewelled fingers against the window-sill with such violence, that Carlotta unconsciously looked for the stream of emeralds and diamonds that must, she thought, have burst their golden settings, and be strewn upon the floor.

A change had passed over the Princess Zabrowsky's face; she no longer looked young and beautiful, but old and weary, with deep lines of passion furrowing her face, and contorting it out of its natural expression. It was no longer the beautiful queen of fashion, but a woman worn and wearyful, who stood at the window and looked out at the lake and the mountains, grey with the promise of coming rain. "Child!" she said, suddenly seizing hold of Carlotta's arm, and almost bruising it by the tightness of the grasp with which she held it, "tell me what should hinder me from lying down under those calm waters, and letting them sweep over my face, and make an end of all? I should not have courage, I know; I should struggle and scream; but if some one were to hold me down, or tie weights, it might all be over notwithstanding, and why should it not be done?"

"The good God forbids it," said Carlotta, simply. "Life is His gift, and when there is no need for us any longer, He will call us away. But you are not a Catholic; that is such a pity."

"Is it?" said the Princess. "But I do not believe there is a God. If there were, it could not be that the wicked should have such power to make the good suffer for years, and for years, and for years, for all their lives in fact. It could not be that the wicked should have power over others to make it so, that nothing they do can ever again be right, ever possibly. No, I do not believe there is a God. I believe there is a devil. I am dreadfully afraid of him, and I am in his power. That is the reason I do not like to die."

"That is worse than the Protestants even," said Carlotta. "They do believe in the good God, most of them, and the priest says they may go to Heaven, some

of them, though they are so unfortunate they do not understand. But do you not wish to go to Heaven? Do you never think of it at all? That is so strange to me, that I cannot understand it. When I am sad, that is what I think of, that the good God is my friend, and that He does not mind about my being stupid, as people here do. He made me so. And I do not think the wicked people can ever do what they like really, for one has nothing to do but to pray, and there come the Blessed Angels to help. Let me tell you a story of what happened not long ago. There was a nun in a Convent once, just as she was going to sleep one night she started up dreadfully frightened, remembering that she had forgotten to shut the outer door, and it was her business. All the lights were put out, and the corridors so long, and so she lay still and trembled, and dared not go down at first. But then she

knew she ought to go, so she commended her soul to her guardian angel, and asked that he should go with her. That gave her courage, and she stole out of bed, and crept along the long dark passages. But she dared not go down at once, it was so awful. She went and looked out of a window at the head of the stairs, and there she saw the door standing open just as she had left it, and before the door a figure standing with a drawn sword, and then there, as she stood watching, came two bad men out of the dark, and she saw they were meaning to break into the convent, and they stood and looked at the door. But there stood the figure with the drawn sword, and they seemed to see it, and passed by. After a little they came back, on the other side of the street now, and they stood and looked again. But there stood the figure with the drawn sword still looking at them as it were. And so

it went on till morning began to break, and carriages and men to pass, and then those two bad men went away, and at that instant the figure disappeared. Then the nun, who was watching, knew how it was her guardian angel, who had taken pity on her, because she was so frightened, and yet wished to do what was right, and that therefore he had come to help her. So they put up a great figure of a Guardian Angel with drawn sword before the Convent, and there it stands still. You can see it in Paris, I believe."

"That is all very well for a story," said the Princess, bitterly, yet stroking the girl's cheek as she spoke. She looked worn out and white now with the violence of her previous excitement.

"It is quite true though," said Carlotta, solemnly. "And I know another story also, yet more beautiful. It is about a little Sister of Charity. She was quite

young, they say, and always, always since quite a child she had wished to go and teach the Heathen, so she became a Sister of Charity, just that she might do so. But then she was never sent, and she thought it more perfect not to ask. Only she wished it so much, that she could not help every day praying that her guardian angel might go instead of her, and this she continued for many years. Then one day came a Bishop from a foreign land, and part of his business was to get some Sisters of Charity to take back with him, and he said to the Director, 'Such a strange thing has happened lately. Whenever I have gone among the heathen, now for a long time, I have always met a little Sister of Charity doing her pious work; but I have never been able, much as I have wished it, to speak to her. Again and again she has gone out of the room as I came in, and always escaped me.' And

it seems the Director thought there was something miraculous about it, because he knew there were no Sisters in that country the Bishop came from, so he asked if he should know the Sister again if he saw her. And the Bishop said 'Certainly,' he had often been quite close to her. So then all the Sisters were called together, and immediately the Bishop singled out the little Sister of the guardian angel, and the Director asked her if she had ever wished to go among the heathen. And she said that had long been her strongest desire. Then he asked why she had never expressed it, and she said, 'Father, I thought it more perfect not to ask, and I have every day prayed my guardian angel to go instead of me.' 'And he has perfectly fulfilled your prayers, my child,' said the Director, and then he told the Bishop's story, and the little Sister went to the heathen land. They say she is working

there now; it is a perfectly true story," said Carlotta, "and it is not long ago that it all happened."

"Ah!" sighed the Princess, out of whom the evil spirits seemed to have been charmed by Carlotta's simple child-like faith. "But there are no wicked people in it. There is no real danger or bitterness till there is sin somewhere, and shame, and the impossibility of telling the grief, the impossibility of ever really speaking the truth to anyone, so that one walks among men, a make-believe, a figure veiled and masked with no part nor sympathy with those around, who have griefs also, perchance, bitter griefs, but griefs they can avow without sinning. Ah! we do not all wish to speak of our griefs; but not to be able to own to them without adding sin to sin, that is to be possessed by an evil demon. And there are more haunted lives than any of us

know, lives warped and shadowed by the sin of another, as by the deadly Upas tree, so that there is in them no comeliness, nor reality. It is when one is in the power of the wicked one must despair."

"That is too dreadful! That would be yet greater sin," cried Carlotta, with wide open eyes. "No, it is then one must pray with all one's heart in one's prayers. But perhaps you cannot pray, as you are not a Catholic. I cannot understand how you are not, for you are not a Protestant either."

But the idea of the Greek Church claiming equal antiquity with that of Rome was quite beyond Carlotta, as also it seemed impossible to her that there should be any Catholics who did not believe exactly as she did, so the Princess soon abandoned her attempt at explanation, and said: "There are numbers of pretty stories I might know too. We have quantities of

Saints, but I only care about one, and he was taken away from me quite young. You will say it was God took him away. I say it was the devil. I might have been good, if he had been left to me. I should have learnt to love him soon, I was just learning then. But I can never be good now, for there is no one for me to love. I must not love him, for I am married to another, and I must not love my husband, because he is a bad—bad man. Do not ever go near the Prince Zabrowsky," she said, hurriedly, "you are good as a little angel, but he might harm even you, if he came near you. Do not speak to him ever —promise."

"He is not likely to speak to me," said Carlotta. "He speaks to no one."

"No, not now — not now. He is frightened, he and the Baron, they are both frightened. They do not know what I will do next, so they dare not come near

me, and they dare not go far from me and I will keep them frightened. I do not mean ever to grow quite sensible again just on purpose. But I do not want to frighten you, my child," she added, caressingly drawing Carlotta nearer to her.

She did frighten Carlotta, however, and from that day she saw less of the young girl. Carlotta indeed avoided her; she had liked the Princess at first, because she was Russian, and kissed her, and it was so nice to talk to someone; but though she could not put it into words, and did not know herself why it was, yet there had from the first been much in the Princess's behaviour at times that did not suit the little girl's ideas, and she was afraid a woman could not be very good who did not love her husband, and did not believe there was a God. Though this Carlotta knew must be nonsense, because there was the good God, and He had

made everything, it was absurd for the very people He had made to doubt about His existence. Why, they would not have been alive at all but for Him, and His goodness.

CHAPTER III.

EVERY day that people stay at Vevey, they find fresh beauties in it; there is a sort of charm about the place, that is hardly felt till towards the end of the first week, but which brings it about that those who stay a week mostly stay a month, and that those who meant to stay a month, mostly stay two, oftener, indeed, the whole winter. It is true that the girdle of vines about the Lake is too broad, and brown, and monotonous; but then the opposite Savoy side turns all manner of purples, while the Dent du Midi has had

such rapturous pages written about itself alone, that it would be but wasting words to try to describe its white serrated summit, finished off as it is in the view from Vevey by the little Sugarloaf Peak, that effectually blocks out the admirer from looking over into the often fought o'er plains of Lombardy, as he is tempted to think he must do, did not that white Sugarloaf so tantalisingly block up the valley of the Rhone. There is a charm even about the great awkward Dent de Jamain standing up like the dunce of the school, a head and shoulders taller than anyone else in the class; a charm about the square old tower of the church of St. Martin, that watches over Vevey from the hill above, a charm about low white Chillon, jutting out into the water to the east beyond romantic Clarens, and opposite equally romantic Meillerie; a charm even about the low Jura standing out purple to the

West, and indicating the neighbourhood of Geneva ; a charm about everything as we pass back along the Savoy side again till we come once more to the long sloping back of Chaumanix exactly opposite, and finish our survey where we began it, not knowing much more than before what the charm is, but feeling very certain it exists, and that all is very beautiful.

Carlotta, who really enjoyed scenery though she never talked about it, began to think Vevey must be the most beautiful place in the world, and as she did not care to see quite so much of the Princess Zabrowsky, now that the Princess had other friends, and conducted herself with them in a way the little girl did not quite like, though she could not possibly have explained why, Carlotta got into the habit of every evening walking up to the old Church of St. Martin, and there from the

little promenade in front of the church, watching the sunset dye all the mountains different shades of red, from deepest rose to unearthly scarlet. It was one evening, coming down from this point of vantage, where a few minutes before tree stems and moss upon them had stood out garishly as in the decorations of a theatre, till the radiance had died away suddenly as it had come, lingering only upon the lofty cross borne aloft by the little German church below, and then dying out there also, and bidding final good-night, warning Carlotta to return home, if she intended to be in time for that important event in hotel life, table-d'hôte dinner. It was coming down from this grand spectacle, that in the little crooked principal street of Vevey Carlotta met Prince Vladimir. She had been thinking of him so very much while watching the sunset, that at first she could hardly believe it

was he himself, but he held out his hand, and for a moment looked much more pleased at seeing her than she at seeing him.

"If I had thought I was to have this pleasure only half an hour ago—" he said.

Carlotta did not pause to think what then. She had been startled at first, now her eyes almost danced out of her head with delight, and she hardly knew where she was, as she exclaimed:

"And you are staying at Vevey! ah, I thought it the most beautiful place in the world before!"

"Is it beautiful?" asked Prince Vladimir, suddenly looking round upon the little street and the shop windows. "I think so too now," he added, turning again and looking at her with a smile and expression Carlotta knew too well by heart. He could not have spoken any

but the most courtly compliments, for it was only those that he had acquired in his youth; and any man would have been moved to gallantry by Carlotta then, her warm loving child-heart fluttering almost upon her lips, and looking straight out of her beautiful dark eyes. But she took every word he said for gospel, and thought he was at least as glad to see her as she to see him. Only she was startled to find he had been far longer at Vevey than they had, and had hardly travelled at all; he had thought the mountains horrible. "Perhaps if I had gone with you I should have thought quite differently," he said, "you would have taught me to admire them."

Then at the word *taught*, Carlotta began pouring out all that she had been trying to learn to please him. It was rather a confused medley; but she told him so earnestly, so pleadingly, what pains she

had taken, and asked so anxiously in the end: "Do you think I am improved?" that Prince Vladimir had hardly the heart to answer at all, it was so pretty to see her so anxious. But at last he said quite gravely, only with that kind smile of his, that made itself felt all the more, because his face looked so utterly sad without it.

"I am sure you must be improved, because the good and charming always go on improving, otherwise I should have thought there was no room for it before."

"Do you go on improving?" asked Carlotta. If Prince Vladimir progressed equally, there would always be the same distance between them, it was of no use taking pains.

"You ask difficult questions," he answered, with a shadow creeping over his face. "But if conquering an old tempta-

tion under a new form——Yes, why not? Why should I not improve also?"

"They talk of the perfect life," said Carlotta shyly, "if it is perfect, there can be no better, and I thought yours was the perfect life, it is just like the Saints, I am sure. You have suffered so much, and you are not angry with anyone. I have a friend now—that is, she says she is my friend—she is very beautiful, and I do not know what she has suffered, but she is not patient about it like you."

"Perhaps she has been more hardly tried."

"How can that be? She is rich, and young, and beautiful; everything she can desire she obtains. Her husband gives her everything, he lets her do just what she likes, and everyone likes and admires her. That is what I do not like."

"Why do you not like it?" asked Prince Vladimir.

Carlotta thought for a little. "If the good God gave me a husband," she said, "I should not care to make myself liked by others, and if one does not care, one takes no trouble, and if one takes no trouble—" and she shrugged her shoulders. Like most impulsive people, Carlotta was mostly wrong when she tried to give a reason for her feelings. The reasons are in such cases after-thoughts, and the person who feels most rightly, that is most reasonably, is not always competent to work back through a chain of reasoning, and discover what gave the first impulse.

"Trouble, or no trouble, I think you would always be liked," said Prince Vladimir, "it is innate in some people, *cet heureux don de plaire.*"

Then the bells from all the hotels began to ring, and reminded Carlotta how late she would be. "I must go now,"

she said, "but I shall see you again."

"Yes—yes," said Prince Vladimir rather hesitatingly, then more firmly. "Please recollect one thing, I am not Prince here, nor do I wear my own name. I am travelling under that of Wereschagine. There are many of my compatriots here, and a man just returned from Siberia is suspicious company. Under an assumed name I can enjoy their society more comfortably. Can you remember?"

"Monsieur — Monsieur" —— stammered Carlotta, in vain attempting to pronounce what had seemed to her but a confusion of consonants. "Monsieur Vladimir is so much easier."

"Very well—very well. Call me Monsieur Vladimir if you like. None of my Russian friends will know me under that name. But do not say anything about my exile to them, or make me known in any way, I entreat."

"May I not even tell my cousins that Mrs. Balfour's brother is here?"

"I would rather that you did not," said he hesitatingly. "But you are so young to keep a secret."

"I am too young to tell one," said Carlotta, suddenly drawing herself up. "Think, it is the first secret I have ever known. It is as safe with me—as safe—as if the angels only knew it. But I shall see you again?" Somehow though the secret was a new and delightful bond between them, she was terribly afraid of his vanishing and passing out of her life once more.

"Why, we are quite near neighbours. Look, there is my room on the third floor at the corner. Do you not see it with one Venetian closed? I have been in that room ever since I came to Vevey, and sometimes I think I shall never leave it again. I can look straight across at where

you are living. Ah, I like my room better than ever now. We shall often meet, I hope—often."

So then Carlotta hurried away comforted and happy, so very happy, that she hardly minded the idea that she should be late for dinner, and perhaps Margaret might be angry. Margaret never was angry, but Carlotta was usually as much afraid of her, as if she were; besides, she had the dreadful idea that any misdeeds of hers would be sure to be at once communicated to Mrs. Anderson, who would certainly take the most severe view of them. However, this evening she was so very happy that she could not be afraid of anything, only she was a little embarrassed by the thought that she should not know what to say, if Margaret asked what had made her so late for dinner, for she could not say she had met Prince Vladimir, as she was not to mention his name.

However, Margaret took for granted she had been too long about her walk, and asked no questions, only bidding her make haste now, because Harry was tired with a long expedition, and impatient for his dinner; and then returned again to say she need not hurry, for Harry was so hungry he had gone down already, which however only made Carlotta hurry the more. A rather disastrous result, as her fingers were already so trembling with excitement, that even in smoothing her hair she made it rougher than before. She had seen Prince Vladimir! he was living in the same place, and from the window of her room she could see the window of his! Was it possible to dress tidily for dinner under such circumstances?

"*La belle Portugaise a de la fièvre ce soir*," said a handsome young Polish Count, one of the Princess Zabrowsky's

many admirers, looking across the table at her, as she made her appearance at last and sat down between Harry and Margaret. But neither of the Andersons noticed any difference in her then, neither did they observe how often and how brightly she smiled to herself as she sat in her usual corner after dinner, shielded from the general world by Margaret and a sketching friend, in whom she had lately found a congenial spirit. After all was it their fault that they were unobservant? if they had been questioned about it, it would have been discovered that they thought themselves amiability itself not to have scolded her for coming in so late to dinner.

CHAPTER IV.

THERE are many amusements with which the little society of Vevey entertains itself, under the shadow of its beautiful scenery beside its lovely Leman Lake, but it is not necessary to enter into details as to its amusements now, any more than it is to describe the society itself; interesting in itself, and very heterogeneous, but having for the most part no further effect upon the principal characters of our story, than that of the chorus of old Greek plays, the *world* of modern days. There is one amusement, however, which must be excepted, though perhaps some

people may object to its being called an amusement. Yet it is not as an occupation, it is not as a branch of science, it is purely as an amusement that Spiritualism is pursued at Vevey, and there are often *séances* held there, when believers believe, and unbelievers come away unconverted, though sometimes astounded. When it was heard that the Baron von Wolff was a noted Spiritualist, there was no peace till he would consent to give a *séance*, but it was rather difficult to know how to manage it. The Princess Zabrowsky, who was a first rate medium, would have nothing to do with it, and declared she would not even appear while it was going on, and the only other person of whom the Baron had any hopes as a medium was Carlotta Figueiras, whom he did not even know.

However, it was at last arranged; Harry Anderson, though absolutely incredulous, had already been present at some *séances*

in London, and was very willing to see another; and Margaret, who had never witnessed anything of the kind, was decidedly curious, so Carlotta, who had not the least idea that she was joining in anything forbidden by her Church, was easily prevailed upon to do what she could.

The *séance* was to be of a primitive nature without any appliances, and the Baron produced a paper with all the letters of the alphabet written in a large semi-circle upon it, and Yes and No at the two ends of the semi-circle. Upon this he placed an inverted saucer with a broad ink line drawn diametrically across it. Then two people were requested to lay each a hand upon the saucer, and if they were mediums it would, after a few minutes, move and answer any questions that might be put to it by means of the ink line indicating various letters one after another. Carlotta was to try first of all, and she

laid on her hand with Harry Anderson, but it seemed his influence was antagonistic. At all events the saucer did not move. He was requested to take his hand off, and Carlotta was to try again with someone else; at that moment she caught sight of Prince Vladimir who had come in through the window, and joined the little group about the saucer. She had seen him once or twice again since their first time of meeting, but always only hurriedly and as it were by chance. She now glanced up at him, inviting him to lay his hand upon the saucer. He did so, and the two hands were a great contrast; Carlotta's little plump brown hand with its taper fingers looked as if it had never done anything useful in its life, and was decidedly ornamental. Prince Vladimir's hand was rough and red; whatever natural shapeliness it might have possessed, it had long

ago been stretched out of, and it was notched and scarred in many places.

Prince Vladimir himself and most people in the room looked at Carlotta's hand, which was certainly the prettier object; Carlotta, however, looked at his, and as had been the case with her once before, when her attention had been particularly directed to his hands, her heart grew hot within her as she thought of the rough hard work which he, of noble birth, had been put to for years, and how that even now he dared not wear his own name, lest the few countrymen he had met at Vevey should shrink from his society as of evil omen. She knew he had never found a friend yet; in one of the few times she had seen him, she had asked him about this, and he had said No mournfully, and that he thought he should never find a friend now. She felt more than ever the wish to be his friend, as she stood thus side by side with him in the

midst of the little crowd all waiting to see the saucer move.

He seemed so different from all others there, so different from Harry Anderson, so different from the old English General, who had just pronounced the Princess Zabrowsky, as she left the room a few minutes before the *séance* began, "The finest woman he had seen, by Gad, since he left Circassia," so different from that *petit crévé* from the Parisian Boulevards, Italian though he was by birth. Carlotta would not have described him thus, but she felt instinctively how different he was from Prince Vladimir. She did not think that she was in love with the Prince; she thought it was pure, disinterested, self-sacrificing friendship that she felt for him, but Moore has told us how Laura was "not the first maiden who came but for Friendship and took away Love," and it was not wonderful that Carlotta, who had

never before tried to analyse her own feelings, should be now somewhat puzzled between those delicate tints of rose colour that separate the two.

However, whilst she was thinking about the Prince Vladimir, and how much she should like to be his friend, really his friend, not just as she was the Princess Zabrowsky's friend, but really; the saucer did not move, and the little society became impatient. The Baron had become very hopeful when he saw Prince Vladimir advance, he knew the strange worn-looking man well by sight; many people indeed knew Prince Vladimir by sight, and he was commonly called at Vevey the Mummy man, for everyone felt that there was something strange about him. Some people recalling that visionary Swede—who declared that mummies are not really dead, but only put to sleep, and that he had means by which to wake them—pre-

tended to believe that this was his experimental attempt which had not been quite successful.

But now when the saucer would not move, the Baron, who had been hopeful at first, began to fear that the two influences were antagonistic, the young ardent life violently combating the wrought-up dreaminess of the worn-out man, yet not sufficiently powerful to act in opposition to it; so he requested Carlotta to remove her hand, and whilst there was a slight hesitation as to who should try their luck together with this new comer, who was a stranger to most of them, the Prince Zabrowsky walked forward, and laid his small well-shaped hand, with its almond-shaped nails carefully cut into points, alongside of the red rough hand of Prince Vladimir. Hardly had he done so before the saucer moved.

"Wait, wait," said the Baron; "we

have not yet decided whose the power is. It may have been the young lady's influence that was antagonistic before."

But both men had removed their hands, and there was a general outcry that the saucer had been pushed.

"No, I did not push it," said Prince Zabrowsky at once. "But come along, Baron; this is great nonsense. Have a game of billiards instead. The Princess has sent word she shall not sleep all night if you go on," he added, in a lower voice. And after a few minutes he carried off the Baron von Wolff to billiards, at which he was still greater than at Spiritualism.

"It is very strange," said Margaret Anderson. "I don't think that saucer was pushed. I don't think any saucer could be pushed in that way without any of us seeing that the hands were doing it."

Harry, however, had seen nothing; he had retired to the further end of the room

in disgust at the fruitlessness of the proceedings, but now was greatly vexed that he had done so, for he had not seen the saucer move. He appealed to Prince Vladimir at once.

"Of course you pushed it!" he said.

But, to everyone's surprise, Prince Vladimir stoutly denied that the saucer had moved at all.

"Surely you must have seen it," said Margaret. "You must have felt it, too. It was not a little move at all; it was a great move."

After this there was a regular buzz of conversation, and every possible opinion was pronounced about the saucer, till at last Carlotta looked up appealingly at Prince Vladimir.

"It is very strange, is it not?" said she.

"Why is it strange?" he asked dreamily. "After all, it was only a saucer and not responsible." Saying which, he disap-

peared through the window into the garden again, and this being quite a new light in which to view the matter, attracted so much attention to him, and caused so many remarks upon his strange appearance, that Carlotta began to feel quite hot and uncomfortable, lest anyone should ask her anything about him. She was astonished also that Margaret did not recognise him; but Margaret had only met him once at that garden-party at Mrs. Balfour's, where she had been entirely engrossed by the question as to Hartnell's future movements, that had so pre-occupied her before his offer, and she had never even been introduced to Prince Vladimir. To Carlotta, however, it was extraordinary that anyone who had once seen him should fail to recognise him again.

The next night the Princess, who was caprice itself, consented to make up to the injured Baron for his unsuccessful *séance*

of the night before. She had undertaken to do so in the morning; but as the evening drew on, her courage began to fail her, and she evidently would have drawn back, had not the Baron been determined. His fame as a Spiritualist was at stake; he must make a display of some kind, and he said something aside to her in Russian that made the Princess flare up, and say disdainfully that she was not afraid of anything. Be it clairvoyance, mesmerism, anything, she was ready. Bah! let anything be done that would amuse the society, and oblige the Baron von Wolff. This last she added in such a sneering tone, that most men would have taken offence; but the Baron had gained his point, and seemed indifferent to all else for the moment. So the experiment was tried, and the Princess was thrown into a state of clairvoyance; she read a page of a closed book, and was then requested to

describe London, which she had never seen. But as she walked through its streets in imagination, she grew whiter and whiter, and groaned ever and anon, till people began to fear that it might be hard to restore her to consciousness, and to whisper that the Baron was carrying his experiment too far, when suddenly the little group was dashed asunder, and the tall gaunt form of Prince Vladimir stood beside the unconscious Princess.

"Is this the way to treat a woman?" he asked indignantly of the Baron von Wolff. "A woman who has but just recovered from a serious illness? Release her; I insist upon it."

The Baron was startled. He was taken aback by the tone of authority coming from one from whom he would least have expected it. He looked at the Prince Zabrowsky, and saw there was indeed no time to be lost. She had half turned

round in her seat, as if she, too, heard the loud tones beside her, and she stared wildly at Prince Vladimir; then suddenly she threw up her arms, and, with a loud shriek, fell forward on her face.

"Leave her to me, leave her to me," cried the now frightened Baron. "You can none of you do anything. No, for heaven's sake do not call the Prince Zabrowsky!" as some one suggested this, "not unless you wish to kill her on the spot. May I ask you to move, Monsieur? Your face to which she is not accustomed might discompose her on awaking. When she sees strangers unexpectedly, curiously enough it is always sure to recall to her one she knew in her early youth, and then she is sometimes ill for days. M. le Comte, she is more accustomed to you than anyone, will you assist me?" Prince Vladimir moved aside and passing back to the open window again, stood there

watching in the shadow of the outside darkness, while the young Polish Count, the Princess's favoured admirer, bent over her, and poured Eau de Cologne on her forehead. The Princess was soon herself again; but she looked very wild and pale, glancing round into the furthest corners of the room, and moving uneasily in her seat. She was not well enough to go upstairs for some time; but when she could do so, she made a low curtsey to the Baron von Wolff, and another low curtsey to the Pole and the rest of the society, as if hoping they were satisfied, and then moved away alone without anyone daring to offer to accompany her. But Margaret Anderson could not allow this; though she had been vexed at Carlotta's intimacy with the Princess, and had barely spoken to her herself, yet this did not make it the less her duty she thought to assist her now,

when she was ill, and seemed unequal to the effort of going upstairs alone; so she followed her and offered her arm as a support. The Princess shrunk back.

"Do not come near me," she said, "do not touch me. I bring bad fortune wherever I go. You are engaged to be married, I know. Take care what may befall you, if you come in contact with me."

"I am not superstitious," said Margaret calmly.

"Are you not?" cried the Princess, suddenly abandoning her attempt to mount the staircase, and sitting down and looking at her. "Tell me then what it means, what I have seen to-night. I have seen my young husband whom I have not met for years and years. I have seen him, not as he used to be, young and beautiful, and happy, but as he would be now, a miserable worn out man. I never should

have guessed that he would be like that; but I know it now that that is how he would be after the sorrow of a lifetime, not in the least like what he used to be—not in the least. And yet I knew him at once, before even I saw that he was altered, and I held out my arms to him, and then—then he vanished." And the Princess buried her face in her hands for a moment. Then she looked up and said, "Tell me, what does it mean? That I shall die *soon?*"

Then Margaret, who professed a certain understanding of Kant, and who could talk glibly of Ferrier and Hamilton, and had many theories about the soul's inward vision and power of projection into space, was nevertheless greatly puzzled what to answer, and said at last, "You were over-excited. I would not think of it if I were you."

"You would not think of it if you were

me. But think you have him, the man you love, you are to be his wife soon; you have a mother, sister, brothers, a happy future smiles before you. I have nothing but the one memory, the spirit of my past, and his eyes came and looked at me to-night almost as they used to do. Does it not mean that there is, as they say, a heaven, a place for the departed, and that I may look to see him really soon, not only in one of those terrible dreams? Ah, why did I consent to have anything to do with this dreadful mesmerism? I shall never get it out of my head again now—never, never!"

"These experiments are very dangerous certainly," said Margaret, "and only to be tried scientifically, and with proper precautions; but will you not come upstairs now? I am sure it would be better for you to go to bed at once."

So the Princess went upstairs to bed,

leaning on Margaret Anderson's arm. Meanwhile poor little Carlotta had been fairly frightened by the *séance*, and having been pushed aside in the first instance by people more anxious and less timid, had gradually retreated into the darkness of the garden where she stood crossing herself, and taking a peep in every now and then. Prince Vladimir had startled her, by brushing past her violently as he burst into the room to insist upon the Baron von Wolff recovering the Princess, but as soon as he had seen that all proper steps were now being taken to restore consciousness he had retired into the garden once more, and then poor frightened Carlotta had crept up to him timidly.

"It is not right, is it?" she asked.

"You here!" said the Prince, as if startled from a dream. "It is certainly not right. She is in much too bad health to be trifled with in this way."

"She is very beautiful," said Carlotta, peeping in shyly, "I have seen a picture of a Saint in an ecstasy that she is very like now. Do you think it would be possible to see Heaven in that way?"

The Prince Vladimir looked at her with his sunken bloodshot eyes, as if it were impossible for him to fall in with her line of thought that night.

"Tell me, child," he said at last, "does she love that handsome young man with the smooth face?"

"The Polish Count! I do not know his name, but he is not her husband," said Carlotta simply. "The Prince Zabrowsky is her husband."

"It is easy enough to see she does not love him. But she must love someone. Hers is a nature that must be miserable without loving and being loved. Can this —this Polish youth satisfy her?"

"She does not care for him," said Car-

lotta earnestly. "I always know when people care for each other, I do not know how, but I always do, and she does not care for anyone. She is miserable, I think. But do you think people must be miserable, unless they have someone to love?"

"It is the greatest sorrow there is," said the exile earnestly. "It is the most ungodlike position. None but the devils are utterly without love, but the less human beings love, the more they resemble them. And though there are natures so childlike beautiful in their power of sacrifice that they are satisfied with loving only, she," and he pointed at the Princess Zabrowsky, then recovering, and looking round her uneasily, but unable to see them as they stood outside in the darkness, "she is none of those, she would give much, but she demands much also. She must be endlessly miserable, unless she has someone who loves her,

and who it can be I cannot think. Ah! perhaps all her affections are given to God!"

"No, she does not love God," said Carlotta sadly. "She is no Catholic, and she does not believe He is good. All she believes in is the Devil," she says.

Carlotta was incapable of understanding the sudden agony that shook the man beside her. "To have lived for this! To have borne all for this," he murmured, and trembled as if shaken by the wind.

"It is cold," said Carlotta, shivering from sympathy. "It is very cold. I think Love must be something like the Sun. It is all dark and wretched without it. The good God likes us to love one another, does He not?"

"Yes," and the Prince Vladimir looked sadly and gravely at her. "He is best pleased when we love one another best, it is then that we best love Him. When we seek not our own happiness from one

another, but lay down our happiness at the feet of another to gather up or to trample upon; when we check our very impulse, lest we should give another pain, and deny ourselves the one thing we prize, and for which alone we have valued life, lest another should suffer through our gratification. Ah, child, you are young and you have a very loving heart, but you can never love too much. Only you can make those very happy to whom you give the treasure of your heart, if you do but do so unselfishly, ready to give up life, and all that makes life precious for their sakes."

"Carlotta!" said Harry Anderson at the window. "Have you gone out into the garden again? It is very chilly, you will be catching cold. Margaret has gone upstairs."

"Good-night," said Carlotta, hurriedly holding out her hand to the Prince Vladimir.

"Good-night," he said, suddenly recalled to the recollection of whom he had been talking to, and how young and pretty she was. And thus recollecting, he looked at her tenderly and earnestly, half fearing that his words might have been too serious for her. He looked at her the more tenderly, because he saw her cheeks were flushed, and her eyes full of tears. But Harry Anderson was waiting, so Carlotta must go at once. She almost tore her hand away, and ran in with the recollection of that gaze, and Prince Vladimir's last words ringing in her ears. She did not fall asleep till late that night, and when she did so she was still murmuring to herself: "I should not care if I were never to be happy again, if I could make him happy." Poor little Carlotta! we often wish to be ourselves the makers of the happiness of those we love. Are we equally ready that they should be happy without any sacrifice on our parts?

CHAPTER V.

"Do you recollect that man, Margaret, who made such a fuss the night of the mesmerism? A strange, wild-looking man! they say that he is dangerously ill. He is not stopping here, you know, but the report is getting about that he has got a most virulent attack of typhus fever, and two sets of rooms have been taken here already by people who are afraid to remain at the other hotel."

"Is it not typhoid?" asked Margaret. "The French always make such a confusion between the two."

"Well, there is not much difference, I

believe," replied her brother. "But the truth is, it is a particularly bad attack of typhus. I've heard all about it, but I can't quite tell you how now. They are taking the greatest precautions lest it should spread, and have shut his part of the house quite off, but they don't seem to be equally careful for him from what I hear. They have got a stupid old woman to nurse him, who is half deaf at the best of times, and who is now also frightened out of whatever wits she once possessed?"

"Should you be frightened?" asked Carlotta. Her colour was higher than usual, but Harry Anderson did not notice this, he was only surprised by the peculiar decision with which she addressed him. It was very rarely indeed that she voluntarily did so.

"Frightened!" said he. "There's no use in being frightened. If a thing has to be done, it has to be. Certainly, I should

be very sorry to nurse anyone through typhus fever just now. It is not that sort of thing one comes to Switzerland for. Well, Margaret, I am off now," and he got up from the breakfast table.

"Is typhus fever very dangerous, Margaret?" asked Carlotta.

"Yes; especially as from what Harry said this seems to be a very bad case. And badly cared for as this poor man seems to be, I should think he had no chance. I only hope it won't spread."

"Should you be frightened to nurse a person who had it?"

"Yes, I think I should," said Margaret. "Of course, I should do it, if it were my duty, but it is very infectious indeed, and that is the reason probably why they have not been able to get a better nurse. I daresay it was very difficult to get one at all. There probably are not any trained nurses here, and it is not everyone who

cares to risk life for a perfect stranger, however well they may be paid."

All that morning Carlotta passed in agony of mind. She had noticed the last two days that Prince Vladimir's windows were shut, and she had never seen him since that evening, when Harry had called her in from the garden, and she had gone away, carrying with her the memory of his gaze, and his last words ringing on in her heart. She felt sure she knew what would be for his happiness now, and she knelt before her open window, and looking at his closed Venetians prayed for strength, but the poor child could not obtain it. Her knees trembled under her, and her cheeks grew pale at the thought of typhus fever. Like most people with southern blood in their veins, she had a terrible fear of infection. Poor little Carlotta, if there had been anyone in whom she had confidence—if she had had any

friend—if Jack had not been so far off, so that a letter could not possibly get to him in time; if there had been anyone to whom she had ever once expressed a fear or a desire, she would in all humility have asked for counsel as to what she ought to do. But as it was there was no one. And yet she could not of herself muster up courage sufficient to think of entering Prince Vladimir's sick room. So she knelt and sobbed all the morning, and tried to pray for him, but could not, because she felt she had no right to ask God to do anything for him, while she would not herself do what she could.

She dried her eyes at last, and tried to look like herself when she had to come down to luncheon, but then a last hope occurred to her. The Princess was very kind, should she ask the Princess if she was afraid of typhus fever? But the Princess screamed at the very name.

"Ah! ah!" she said, "do not talk to me of illness. I want to be dead sometimes, but never to die. That is horrible —too horrible—to be eaten by worms, and the cold earth—the beyond might be beautiful; but do not talk to me of illness, whatever you do. Count, say something gallant to me at once, this child has given me *migraine* by what she says. *Ma belle*, how pale you look! You are not ill yourself, are you?"

But Carlotta was trembling on a sob, so she only kissed the Princess, and moved on.

At luncheon, Margaret said, "I am going to sketch up by St. Martin this afternoon, Charlotte, will you come with me, or would you not like to seize this quiet time, when everyone is out, to practise a little?"

Carlotta made no answer, and a quarter of an hour after, the poor frightened child was kneeling before the image of the

Virgin in the little Vevey church, and sobbing as if her heart would break. If even the curé had been there! She had confessed to him once or twice, she might have asked him to advise her now, but he was away, and there was no one to ask. Though almost sure that she ought to go to Prince Vladimir, Carlotta could not get out of her head that there was something wrong about it; she felt afraid Jack would be angry. But then she was so terribly frightened herself, that fear alone quenched every other thought. However, calm stole over her at length; the soothing influence of the church exercised its powers by degrees, and the poor little self-immolating martyr rose at last from her knees, white and tear-stained, but resolute. She was ready now to lay down her life for another. Only she turned and took one more last tearful look at the Virgin Mother and the little church, that perhaps she might never

see again. Then she went out into the street, and walked quickly on to the hotel where Prince Vladimir lay ill.

The master of the hotel never knew how it was, he was quite confused, as he said afterwards; of course, he thought that the pretty young lady who looked so tearful, and talked of M. Vladimir not M. Wereschagine, by which name Prince Vladimir was known at Vevey, must be some relation of his. She was evidently not English or Swiss, so he took for granted she was Russian, and he led her upstairs at once, only wondering that no older relative had been sent to nurse the sick man, as he expressed his regrets to her, that he could not give her any better news that day, but the doctor said it was *grave—très grave.* "Would Mademoiselle, Mademoiselle or Madame? Mademoiselle, thanks—would Mademoiselle really like

to go into the sick-room itself? Had she considered it was very infectious?"

"I have come on purpose," said Carlotta simply, "I have come on purpose to nurse him."

"Then will Mademoiselle pardon me—I can indicate the door, but I could not with any conscience towards the strangers in my house hold any intercourse with them if I approached the sick-room myself, so I will not go along the passage. Mademoiselle will find *la bonne Marie* very obliging. She is a good creature, though a little old and rather frightened. Is Mademoiselle quite determined?" It was no wonder he asked, and thought again that this was a strange young nurse for the sick man, for Carlotta looked like nothing but a frightened baby, as she stood still, trembling with her large tearful eyes opened to their widest extent, and the colour fluttering in her cheeks. But

she was not going to draw back from her sacrifice now; none of the Saints had ever drawn back that she had heard of, so though she thought she was walking to her death, she crossed herself, and commending her soul to the Virgin, went on.

When she entered the room, however, she ceased to be frightened in the way she had been frightened before; for she had never been in a sick-room before, and she thought Prince Vladimir was dying at once. Through all the fear and agony of the preceding time the girlish heart had been beating high with anticipation, and feverish blushes had been dying the young cheeks, but she blushed no longer now, her heart seemed to stop beating altogether, and a sick feeling of desperation came over her as she caught sight of Prince Vladimir, the man for whom a short while before she had been trying to think it happiness to die. She did not

look upon it as happiness any longer now, but neither did she think of dying herself now; all feeling of exaltation had passed away, all thought of self had passed away with it.

The cheeks of the sick man were flushed with fever, his eyes shone wildly, he was no longer strong enough to toss his arms about as before, but he was muttering to himself in a thick strange voice. The nurse was standing at the far end of the room, regarding him with a terrified expression. The love seemed to have died out of Carlotta's heart, but the devotion had not; she walked up to his bedside at once, and kneeling down pressed his hand to her lips. It was thus that the Greeks burnt their ships, signifying that there was no retreat. Carlotta had no notion how infection was conveyed, but she fancied that when she had once knelt by his bedside and kissed his hand, there

could be nothing more dangerous after that, and that having done this, she could never shrink back now. She remained on her knees, and prayed for the rest of his soul, if God were really calling him to Himself. Now that she had seen him, she had no doubt that he was dying. She had no thought to spare for herself now, all her thoughts were absorbed in prayer for him. It was terrible to think he was not a Catholic, he must require so many prayers.

Naturally when the doctor came in, poor old Marie talked of *Mademoiselle la nièce de Monsieur*, and the doctor being thus informed of the relationship, took it for granted, only reflecting as the hotel-keeper had done before, that this was a strangely pretty young relative who had been selected as nurse.

"You are too young and too pretty for this office, Mademoiselle," he said.

"Am I too young and too pretty to die?" asked Carlotta, too much in earnest to think about the compliment, "I do not wish to die. Do you think I must?"

"Nonsense," said the doctor. "Who talks about dying? So you think you are going to catch the fever like this stupid old Marie here? Why, if everyone caught fever who came near to it, the world would all be dead by this time. No, Monsieur is going to get quite well now you have come to nurse him, and you are going to gladden him by being rosy and merry as a little bird."

The doctor could not think much about the correctness of his simile, for he was a good deal troubled about his patient with two such frightened nurses; however, he found Carlotta as obedient and attentive as possible. The little girl looked at him with her great eyes, and seemed to receive his directions straight into her

heart at once. She had never been in a sick-room before, and even to be told to be careful to keep it fresh seemed like news to her.

Oh, the number of Aves and Paternosters that Carlotta repeated in that sick-room that night! She never forgot one of the doctor's directions, everything that he had told her was done, and to the minute; but even when her mind was occupied, her lips never ceased moving for a moment. When it came to grey dawning again, that time when everything grows strange and unearthly, and even tables and chairs look weird, dimly seen in their old places again, the little girl felt a deep peace steal over her. She went to the window and looked out, and saw the Lake spread out grey before her as in a line engraving, and the Savoy hills still in deep shadow, though the sun was already gilding the serrated summit of the Dent du Midi.

Gradually there came a rosy flush and bright golden clouds, and then all on a sudden the sun itself appeared, and sent one bright ray down on to the Lake beneath, and woke it into the life of another day. The plashing of the water no longer sounded melancholy as before, there was animation about it now, and the little irregular accompaniment of the fountain in the garden sounded cheerful in Carlotta's ears.

A deep peace came over her, and she felt sure that her prayers had been heard; but she was so weary, she was afraid of falling asleep, so she went back to the bedside again, where the poor old Marie sat in an arm-chair nodding. Carlotta did not dare to sit down, she felt sure she should fall asleep if she did, but Marie did not mind about sleeping. The old woman looked upon Carlotta as a lovely angel, and felt no longer afraid, since she had

entered the room. How could anyone feel afraid with those childlike confiding prayers sounding on in their ears? But she trusted a great deal to the young nurse, who was too zealous to be willing to trust much to anyone else as yet.

Prince Vladimir had been lying very still; now all on a sudden he opened his eyes, and seemed to recognise Carlotta; he put out his hand feebly, and pressed hers.

"Thank you. My mother will thank you," he said.

He had never spoken of his mother before, and a strange awe came over Carlotta as she knelt by his bedside, not daring to move her hand away. She had left off praying now, for what need was there to pray, when she felt her prayers were answered? But it seemed hardly time to give thanks yet.

"Nadia!" murmured the sick man.

"Nadine!" It was the one name that had always been on his lips during his illness. "You love me, do you not, as I love you? You love no one else? I have never loved anyone else. God is very good; yes, Nadia, He is good, very good. He has given us each other's love. What matter if we have been separated? It was but for a little while, and there is all eternity. Ah! God is good, very good. Nadia, where are you? I do not see you. Nadia, my own, my own—"

Then he went on to talk in Russian, and Carlotta could not understand him; but she heard the same name over and over again.

"It is his wife, I suppose," she thought. "Of course, he had a wife once. I wonder if she is alive now? How can he care for her, when she has forgotten him, and married another? But he *does!*" Carlotta went away to the window, and looked

out; she did not herself understand the sudden sharp pain she felt at her heart, the bitter agony of jealousy that had overpowered her for the moment. "She has not come to nurse him," cried the little girl, clenching her hands as she spoke. "She would not even go with him when he went away. And he loves *her—her!* Why did I come? *Ah Jesu!*" she exclaimed, suddenly bowing her face for shame, and covering it with her hands. "What have I done? What have I said?" and she fell on her knees by the window, and prayed for pardon, while the tears streamed down her cheeks. It was very grave and heavy-eyed that the doctor found her, when he came to make his morning call.

"Have you been praying for him all this time?" he asked, as having left her on her knees, he found her on her knees again.

"No, I am not praying for him," said Carlotta, rising wearily. "It is not necessary. He is better."

The doctor, surprised at the decided tone looked scrutinisingly at his patient; but he could not himself see any great signs of amendment.

"To-night will be the critical time," he said. "I don't think he is much better yet."

"You will see," said Carlotta. "It will go well with him now. I have taken the illness out of him. It has left him, and come to me."

Then the doctor began to examine her; but he could not detect any signs of fever in her, so he thought it was still nothing but nervousness, though from the first he had feared it was more than likely that the two frightened nurses would catch the infection, especially the one who was so much too young and too pretty.

However, when he came back in the evening, he could still detect no signs of her having the fever; nor could he perceive any sensible amendment in the patient, as he prepared to remain quietly and watch by his side till the crisis should be past. Then Carlotta, finding there was nothing for her to do, fell on her knees again, and told her rosary diligently, praying for Prince Vladimir now again. She could not pray any more for herself, the enemy of the morning had been conquered; but it seemed to her that her life was over. There was nothing left for her to wish, or fear, or hope; only for Prince Vladimir she prayed, that God might love him, and one day take him to Himself.

Perhaps it was because the doctor was not what is commonly called a religious man, that the sight of Carlotta kneeling and praying made such an impression upon him; but he felt he should never forget

to his dying day that watch by the side of the sick, strange-looking Russian, with the little figure kneeling in the shadow, her eyes raised to Heaven, and her fingers diligently telling her beads. They were very pretty fingers, and the little figure was very pretty also, and the face prettiest of all; but what touched the doctor was the fervour and trustfulness with which the young girl prayed. It was as if her Heavenly Father were there in the room with her, and she were telling Him what she wanted, and asking Him to be kind. Yet "Not my will, but Thine be done," prayed Carlotta. There was no intensity of wishes distracting her from her prayerfulness.

"Mademoiselle, your prayers are granted," said the doctor at last. "It is not my skill, but your prayers that have saved him, for I think he is saved now."

Carlotta rose and looked at the sick man; he was slumbering peacefully now, and though his cheeks looked hollow and wasted, it was easy to see that the strength of the fever had left him, though not without leaving behind its ravages.

"Do you think he will be glad to live?" asked the girl, looking at him with a strange sad expression.

"I cannot say, but I should think so," and the doctor glanced at her for a moment inquiringly.

"I have at least done what I could for him," said Carlotta. "It would have been cruel to leave him to die, would it not? and the good God hates cruelty. I have done what I could, have I not?"

Then the doctor began giving her a great many directions as to precautions she was to take, and Carlotta looked puzzled; she had thought Prince Vladimir would be well all at once. She could not understand

that it would take time. But again she followed out all the doctor's directions punctually and carefully, and when he returned the next morning he found his patient going on as well as he could have wished—but not so Carlotta. The girl looked excited, her cheeks were flushed, her eyes wild, she spoke hoarsely and excitedly, but she said nothing now about having the fever herself. The doctor did not know what to do, he was afraid that the shock of learning she had taken the infection would kill her at once.

"My child," he said, "you must take care of yourself now; you must go and undress regularly, and go to bed. Think you have been sitting up two nights, and *notre malade* is better."

"But there is still much to do for him, you said so yourself. I have not done all I can yet. I must do all I can, or the good God will not be pleased. I promised

the blessed Virgin I would do all I could," she laid a strange emphasis on the words *all I could*, as if nothing in the least short would satisfy her.

"But you must take care of yourself, or the good God will not be pleased either. He does not like people to kill themselves."

An expression of wild terror passed over Carlotta's face. "Kill themselves! *Ah Deos!* you think that I am dying. You think that I have got it. I told you I had, I told you I had, and you would not believe me. *Ah Jesu! Jesu!* I am dying," and she rushed to the window, and almost dashed her head against it as she buried her face in her hands, and rocked herself backwards and forwards sobbing violently.

The doctor became stern, horribly stern, as he thought afterwards. But at the time he only considered that the lives of two

people were at stake, for he feared that Carlotta's sobs would waken the Prince Vladimir, besides doing herself great harm, so he ordered her imperiously to be calm.

"God will not like it at all, if you are cowardly like this. Come, be brave, show courage. It is not at all necessary to die because you are ill, but it is necessary to go to bed."

"Where can I go?" asked Carlotta, standing up before him quite docile now, though with under lip still quivering. "Who will nurse me? There is no one?"

"Nonsense! have you no relations, no one? Are you here all alone? I do not understand, you are so young."

"They will not nurse me," said Carlotta, nodding her head solemnly, "they do not love me, and they are afraid of the fever. I asked them before I came."

"Look," said the doctor, "if you would

go down to Lausanne, I know a family of good Samaritans who would nurse you there. But have you courage to go there alone, ill as you are? You must go by the steamer, for I dare not send you by the train, and mind you keep as far as you can from everyone. Let the wind blow from them to you. I cannot go with you, and yet I believe I might manage. Yes, I will meet you on board the next steamer if you will be ready. Wrap yourself up warm. You are of no more use here now, for Marie understands better now, and besides he is better. Will you go down to the next steamer and meet me on board? I must pay one more visit first. Now have you got shawls with you, or shall I ask them to send you up something?" asked the doctor, and then he hurried away to send up wraps and get through his next visit. "It is a great risk," he muttered, "but it is the only

chance. This girl will die if she is not tenderly nursed. It was bad enough with a man; but with a little frightened thing like this it would be hopeless. She must have some one to pet her, and give her courage. And yet it is curious how she prayed last night, one would have thought she would rather like to go to Heaven."

CHAPTER VI.

How pleasant is the aspect of an English breakfast table after a little travelling in foreign parts! What an aroma there is about the tea, what crispness in the toast, how fresh and good the butter! The very table cloth seems whiter than it used to be, and the table wider, there is an air of plenty about the sideboard with its cold partridges, and cold ham, and how unspeakable is the relief of hearing no one tap a knife against a cup, or call imperiously, *Garçon!* Jack Anderson stretched his legs out before him with the agreeable consciousness that no one was likely to

tumble over them, and felt a feeling of *bien-être* steal over him, such as there was no resisting. He had brought Jessie back for a few days to her old home, before finally settling in the Clapham villa that was to be her residence now; and there was a real pleasure in hearing old Mr. Blackburn's delight in tea made by her practised hands again, and Mrs. Blackburn's enthusiastic compliments on her good looks, and on the care Jack must have taken of her. Jack himself looked improved by his holiday, he was a little browned, and somewhat stouter they thought, and there was a gloss upon his hair and a general appearance of being brushed up, and of being now in the habit of finding it worth while to try to look his best, that gave him somewhat less the air of a business man than usual, and made one appreciate what really good broad shoulders he had, and what a fine athletic

fellow he might have been under other circumstances, yet without at all detracting from his general air of respectability and steadiness.

Priscilla had been trying to poke him up a little, but in vain, for Jack's good humour was imperturbable; and now having finished the more weighty part of breakfast, he was free to devote his attentions to the tea and toast, and to watch old Mrs. Blackburn's pink cap strings floating in the little breeze that stole in at the open window, or to discourse with Mr. Blackburn upon the harvest, which was over, and the bean crop, which was just being got in. Mr. Blackburn, as solicitor in a country town, took a great interest in agricultural matters, his business having connected him closely with the landed gentry.

"There's Lord ——, he is sending his youngest son into business," said old Mr.

Blackburn, having exhausted his information upon the bean crop. "That looks strange, doesn't it, Jack? I wonder he doesn't keep him to look after the estate a bit, do a little gentleman farming, that is what I should think more suitable now. Sending an earl's son into business, it seems a come down, doesn't it?"

"For business you mean," said Jack, roused at last. "I quite agree with you, I am sick of seeing these dilettante young men making believe upon clerks' stools. They don't really go in for business at all. They put no heart into the matter. Fancy an artist expecting to succeed without caring for his profession, or a soldier, or anyone! But all these young popinjays with their eye-glasses and their shooting-coats, all they think of is making money, and they call it dirty work, and fancy it is more gentlemanly to be cheating a tailor, and running away from a laun-

dress, than trying all they can to get a fair market price for their goods. Business is hard, like most things, to carry on honourably and upon the square, but it is nothing else that lasts in the long run, though with luck, a dishonest trick or two may win a lot of money now and then. But they win a bad name also, and nowhere is that a greater hindrance than in business. These fine young gentlemen, who see it is conducted on other principles than what they call debts of honour, and that all business men are not gentlemen, think the first thing they have to do is to get rid of their gentility, and the whole place is so swamped by them in England now, I don't know whether business won't soon become as hollow a thing as they fancy it. If so, that will be the end indeed of our commercial prosperity, no nation can remain commercially prosperous that is not more honest than its

neighbours. Why cannot those great Italian cities recover their position now? It is because they remain demoralised, and whilst they remain so, no Suez Canal nor Brindisi route will help them."

"So that is the idea with which you have returned from your travels, that we English are at this present moment considerably superior to other people. Oh, commend me to an Englishman for one-sidedness," cried Priscilla. "I don't know what other nations are like, of course, but I can't wonder the British Lion has left off roaring, since it has taken to crowing so prodigiously."

"I was only speaking of honesty," said Jack. "There are many other virtues, though I confess that seems to me a primary one. However, I own I have not stayed long enough abroad to appreciate the virtues of foreigners. It was very pleasant though while it lasted, was it

not?" and he turned smilingly to Jessie, whose answering smile was unfailing, for Jessie had found married life, at least so far, quite all she could have fancied. "But I must say I am heartily glad to be back in old England again, and I never thought this room looked so nice before. Why just look at the garden, now do you ever see turf like that abroad? and then think of the advantage of having the *Times* every day fresh, and all one's letters at breakfast-time." And Jack began to turn over his correspondence, about reading which there were no rules at Leamington.

"Have you heard how Carlotta is enjoying herself?" asked Priscilla.

"Yes, she writes quite pretty descriptions of Switzerland," said Jessie, "to Jack of course, but there is always a long message to me, lest I should feel jealous, and she sends her love always to you,

Priscilla. Indeed her letters are full of complimentary messages. I believe it is the foreign way of writing, but it is curious how she should have picked it up. I daresay she is happier, now that they are a smaller party; she must see more of Margaret, and she always liked Margaret best."

"Yes," said Jack, without looking up; "she and Susan haven't much in common. Ah, here is a letter from Harry, very likely giving news of her," and he tore it open. "Good Heavens!" he exclaimed, as his eye glanced over the first few lines.

"What is it? who is it?" exclaimed the two sisters, and old Mr. and Mrs. Blackburn in chorus.

"Why it is Carlotta. She has disappeared!"

"Disappeared! Where to?"

"They don't know. She has gone away."

"What! Carlotta run away! run away with somebody! O—h!" cried Priscilla, with a long drawn out intonation, expressing that she had thought better of her, and was greatly disappointed to find herself in the wrong.

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Jack, angrily, quite relieved to be able to vent his indignation upon somebody. "She has never run away with anyone; Carlotta is not the kind of girl. She would always write to ask leave, if she were ever so much in love. And besides, who could she be in love with? There is no one. She has never mentioned anyone in her letters, has she, Jessie? There was that Russian Princess, she said she liked her. But—but you see what Harry says: 'I write at once on the chance that you may possibly be able to give some clue as to where Charlotte has disappeared to. She was not forthcoming for dinner last night,

and we have no idea what has become of her.'" Jack paused, and looked round the table defiantly. If anyone was going to say again that Carlotta had run away with somebody, he was going to have the pleasure of contradicting them, for he knew better, he knew she had not.

But no one said anything, till at last Jessie asked: "And what does Harry say besides?" and she slid her hand soothingly into his, as he spoke, for she could see he was dreadfully vexed.

"Oh, he says nothing," said Jack, indignantly. "'We have tried every means of tracing her—but in vain. One person recollects seeing her go into the church that day, and another recollects meeting her near the shops, but we can't find her anywhere. It seems she must have left Vevey, but no one can recollect any one like her, either at the station or the steamer piers. However, she could

very easily have walked to one of the neighbouring stations, or any of the toher landing stages, and there are so many, it is very difficult to make sure. Of course, I am doing all I can to find her, but have you any idea what should make her wish to go away, or whom she should wish to go with? Margaret is in great distress about her, for she says she had not noticed anything wrong, only was surprised that Charlotte did not come to join her sketching; but now the Princess Zabrowsky declares she noticed that Charlotte had very red eyes, when she came down to luncheon, and a Polish Count, whose room is next to Charlotte's, declares he heard her crying all the morning. But he is such a conceited coxcomb, and such a chatter-box, I don't like to ask him anything more about it. It is the most unfortunate affair, and of course all the gossips of Vevey, as numerous as the in-

habitants, are full of it.' There," said Jack, "I know what it is. I asked Harry to be kind to her, and neither he nor Margaret have given her a thought, till at last the poor child has grown so miserable—she has run away in despair. I daresay she is trying to come here, but how will she ever manage the journey alone?"

"I don't think that is possible, Jack," said Jessie, soothingly. "Margaret would never be unkind to her, though she might neglect her a little, and if Carlotta had been so very unhappy, she would have written to say so, she would not have run away without saying anything."

"Well, at all events," said Jack, "I must go at once to look for her. I shall not trust them to do that; and I tell you what, Jessie, I shall take her to live with us. I thought of it before, but this decides me now."

"Nonsense," said Priscilla; "it is quite

settled, she is coming here. We are all agreed about it, are we not?" said she, looking appealingly at her father and mother. "It is wretchedly dull without Jessie, and since Jack has taken her away, the least he can do is to give us Carlotta instead. She can keep house, and make the tea, and do everything that Jessie used to do, even to supplying some one for me to tease. It would be cruelty, indeed, to shut the poor girl up with a young married couple, whose heads are stuffed full of one another. The last thing wanting to make her go regularly melancholy mad. No; here is the vacant place, and there is Carlotta; of course, she is to fill it."

"Yes, yes," said old Mr. Blackburn, nodding his head. "Let the little girl come here. I like her pretty face about the house, and so do you, eh?" said he, appealingly, to his wife. "Reminds you

of your own when you were young, doesn't it?" and he chuckled over the implied compliment.

"Thank you, Mr. Blackburn," said his wife, equally good humouredly. "Yes; don't you see, Jack, that will be a great deal better. She would be in yours and Jessie's way, and she would be a real comfort to all of us here. So do you go and fetch her, and tell her this house is to be her home till she gets a home of her own, and then we'll be as sorry to lose her as we were to lose Jessie here, I daresay," said the mother, her eye resting with matronly pride upon her daughter, whose hair looked smoother and more shining, and her expression even sweeter than of old.

"Shall it be so, Jessie?" asked Jack. "Ought I to accept your father's and mother's kind offer?"

"Why, Jack, you know they like no-

thing better than making people happy. They will be as pleased as possible to have Carlotta, and I think she will be happy here. Only the thing now is to find the poor child, for I don't somehow think she will come here of her own accord. I shall go with you, of course, Jack?"

But then Jack demurred a little; he meant to travel straight through to Switzerland, and it seemed a pity to fatigue Jessie by the long journey, if he was to bring Carlotta at once back with him again.

"I tell you what, Jack," said Priscilla. "I am as strong as a horse. Nothing tires me, and we all know travelling tires Jessie; she can't sleep, and I can sleep anywhere. Take me with you; you may want some one, the poor child may be in greater trouble than you think. And Jessie can take care of the parents, while I am away."

In this way it was in the end settled, though there was a great deal of discussion first, and a great deal of wonderment as to where Carlotta could possibly be, and what could have made her go away; but this did not prevent Priscilla and Jack from starting by the next express through for Paris. They were determined to get to Switzerland as quickly as possible. A telegram which Jack had telegraphed to ask for met them at Geneva, saying, "No news;" but notwithstanding this, it was still a shock to them, when they arrived at Vevey, to be told by Harry that he had as yet heard nothing. Margaret looked so pale and unhappy that Jack could not vent his anger upon her; but he spoke more severely to his brother than he had ever done before.

"I trusted her to you, Harry," he said. "I asked you to be kind to her."

"Nobody has been unkind to her," said

Harry, indignantly. "No, as a lawyer, I confess I am piqued, that I cannot imagine what sudden freak has seized her, nor discover where she is. I don't believe she knew a soul but the people who are still all here, and who know nothing of her, I am certain. I never saw her speak to anyone out of the hotel, except a curious looking Russian about some mesmerism one night, and he was down with fever before she ever disappeared; so she can't have gone off with him."

"She has gone off with no one," said Jack, angrily. "No; the truth is, you never thought once about her, nor troubled yourself to speak a kind word to her, and at last the poor child could bear it no longer, and she has gone away. Have you asked in the convents round about?"

"I have asked everywhere," said Harry. "No, you may say what you like, Jack, but I think you know me well enough to

understand that I would spare neither time nor trouble to clear up a mystery like this. Why I even thought once of paying a visit to that typhus-fever man, because I had once seen Carlotta speak to him, and thought he might know something, but I heard he was barely conscious yet, and that a relation, who had come to nurse him, was down with the fever too now, so I thought, on the whole, it was better not. That hotel is in a regular state of quarantine, but altogether Vevey is in a pretty state. There has been a murder in the house here, and as nothing is quite without its good side, that has fortunately distracted attention from Carlotta of late. Really it is a most curious affair, no one knows what to think of it, and I am on as one of the witnesses. I think I could make a pretty strong case of it against somebody, if I had the conducting of the case. However, it does not

seem necessary, people say it will be strong enough anyhow."

So then Jack, impatient though he was for news of Carlotta, had to hear the whole story, which perhaps had better be detailed to the reader in a separate chapter, and as it really occurred, without the assistance of Harry Anderson's colouring.

CHAPTER VII.

THERE had been a quarrel in the smoking-room one night, that was generally considered the beginning of all things, but none of the gentlemen rightly knew how that began, only it had been generally observed that the Polish Count was making himself more disagreeable than usual. He had been taking great airs upon himself in the drawing-room, leaning over the beautiful Princess Zabrowsky in what was justly considered too intimate a fashion; saying he should scold Josephine for having arranged her coiffure not to his taste, but otherwise maintaining the air of enjoying

too much of her conversation in her boudoir alone to care to deprive others of it in public; taking her fan from her lap without asking her leave, and holding it up for a screen between himself and the fire, as if his complexion were the most delicate in the room, for sooth! and at one time actually presuming to play with the bracelets on her arm. Whilst all this had been going on, he had uttered one or two drawing-room impertinences to other ladies, which they would certainly be ready to pardon next day in consideration of his being such a very handsome young man, but which they resented at the moment.

Then he had sauntered into the smoking-room, and especially exerted himself to be provoking to the Prince Zabrowsky and the Baron von Wolff, as if the parade he had already made of his favour with the Princess, might not possibly have rendered his presence already sufficiently distasteful

to the Prince. He had a peculiarly noiseless way of gliding about, as if he walked upon velvet, that had from the first made him objectionable to Harry Anderson, and he had a way of standing quite still, and yet seeming to quiver with suppressed motion, as some animals quiver while their limbs are apparently at rest, but as civilised men are not in the habit of doing.

This particular evening, he kept walking about the smoking-room with the most tantalising appearance of intending to go every moment, and yet not going; he kept getting in the way of billiard players and their strokes, and in fact made himself generally obnoxious, till at last he took up a cue himself, and throwing his tall graceful figure into an approved billiard player's attitude, hit the balls about in such a masterly fashion, that the Baron von Wolff could not resist challenging him to a trial of skill. Then gradually people

thought that was what he had been aiming at, and at the same time became fascinated by watching his play, which was brilliant, but at the same time peculiar and characteristic. Sometimes he would take aim for five minutes together, then suddenly draw himself up, arrange his long fair moustache with a mixture of foppishness and insolence, and then barely glancing at the billiard-table dash off a canon which the Baron himself would have had difficulty in accomplishing.

The betting ran high, but was decidedly in favour of the Count; then all on a sudden he fell off, and played so abominably, that he might almost be said to have lost the game on purpose. Yet he had not been betting against himself, so there was nothing to say, only most men would have felt the billiard-room too hot to hold them under such circumstances. Not so the Polish Count, he drew an armchair to

the fire, and settled himself in it, warming his hands at the blaze as complacently as possible. Then he drew a letter from his pocket, and holding it ostentatiously before him, he began to read it, glancing every now and then at the Prince Zabrowsky, as he did so, with an air of extreme attention, as if seeking to convey the impression that the letter was about him. It was so evidently a bit of comedy that he was playing, and so clear that he wished to be asked what his letter was about, that no one present would pay him the least attention. At last, he rose up, and walked to the billiard-table again; folding his arms he leant upon it in an easy attitude, putting his face almost against the Prince Zabrowsky's, as he said, "Strange that one person should receive intelligence that so intimately concerns another!"

His long fair moustache positively touched the Prince's short pointed one.

"It is much stranger that you should put yourself exactly between me and the ball I am intending to hit," said the other, angrily. The Prince had lost money upon the previous match, he had bet heavily upon the Count.

The young man darted away, then paused, and still with folded arms, looked meditatively at the billiard-table. "Perhaps it is strangest of all, that you should be able to take interest in a mere game, whilst—"

"Whilst what?" asked the Prince Zabrowsky, suddenly drawing his short figure up to its full height, and looking sternly at the young man out of his suspicious slanting eyes.

"Whilst Prince Vladimir Avrorloff is in Switzerland," said the other, in soft cooing tones, strangely out of character, with the smile of triumph with which he spoke.

The Prince Zabrowsky stood immoveable, as if he had been turned into a statue on the instant. He tried hard to retain his composure, but he could only do so by drawing every muscle as taut as it could strain, the change that had passed over his face was evident enough.

"That is a lie," said the Baron von Wolff, coolly.

"This to me!" said the young man, angrily.

"I know better," replied the other. "I should have been informed sooner than anyone, had what you said been the case, but my correspondent tells me the Prince Avrorloff was with his sister in London, and has gone thence to some sea-baths."

"Perhaps your correspondent is mistaken, or does not care to inform you. Anyhow I have it here for certain," and the young man tapped the letter which he had produced again.

"Show it to me," said the Baron, defiantly.

"What, do you doubt my word?" cried the Pole, angrily.

"A Pole's word!" said the Prince Zabrowsky. They were the first words he had spoken, and all the pent up bitterness of his soul gushed forth in his scornful tones.

The Polish Count turned, and actually gnashed his teeth at him; the young man's attitude was splendid at that moment, he was like a tiger preparing to spring. The honour of his country had been attacked. It was the only thing that was holy to him.

"Prince, you are a fool!" said the Baron, contemptuously. "Or have you got over your antipathy to naked steel? No, dear Count, I do not doubt your veracity. Only your correspondent may have been mistaken, or—he may have

told you more. Come, is it to be *guerre à outrance*, or the Holy Alliance?"

"Oh, the Holy Alliance, by all means. My country profited so much by it," he added, bitterly. "Be another *Alexandre le bien intentionné*, tell me one thing, and you shall have this letter," and the young man drew the Baron aside, and whispered a few words to him in Russian. The Baron looked startled, but answered hurriedly, as if driven into a corner and seeing no outlet. He held out his hand for the letter, as he did so. The Pole tore off the signature, and gave it to him, then he clapped his hands in triumph like a child. "I only guessed it," he said, "and he has told me. I have outwitted the Baron von Wolff. There, Prince, I know all now. What did you say about Poles?"

"I say they are bad as enemies—whether they are better as friends is a question," but this latter sentence he

muttered between his closed teeth, and the young man took no notice of it, for by this time the Baron had mastered the contents of the letter, and comprehending the Pole's last remark, he came forward saying:

"Cowards and rogues are good company. There, Monsieur, is your letter. I will not stay here any longer. I hate the society of cowards. A man who was a man at all would have fought a duel in the first instance," and with a withering glance at the Prince Zabrowsky, he left the room.

"Cowards! Whom does he call cowards?" asked the Count. "Somebody must fight. It is impossible to put up with such a word as that. Was it addressed to you or me, Monsieur le Prince?"

"The word rogue was probably meant for the other," replied the Prince, slowly. "It is too difficult a point for me to decide.

I wish you good-night, M. le Comte; I am tired. I wish to sleep."

"You may *wish* it," said the young man, and walked gaily to the window, humming an air from Faust. "It strikes me it will be a good long time before you will sleep to-night, M. le Prince."

The next day the Baron von Wolff was found dead in his bed.

"Found dead, and the bed full of blood," that was the report that reached the ladies at breakfast, and made some of them scream, and all of them turn pale. The Polish Count had come down unusually early for him, he had been walking about the breakfast tables, and making himself generally agreeable to the ladies, as if to atone for his naughtinesses of the night before; but as he heard the news, Harry Anderson noticed him turn pale and lean against the wall for support. He did not show any surprise, and seemed

to be seeking to hide his emotion, but Harry Anderson could not be mistaken about that sudden paleness, and looked sternly at him. The young man cowered under his gaze. Then Harry turned at once away, and was in a hurry to get Margaret upstairs, he felt all on a sudden as if the society had become unfit to leave her alone in, and he was in a hurry to get away himself. His mind was still full of the mysterious disappearance of Carlotta, and his own unsuccessful attempts to find her, he was on the *qui vive* for anything new, besides as a lawyer he took a professional interest in what might turn out to be a murder. He hurried Margaret upstairs, and after staying a little to set her mind at rest, and assure her the murder, if it were a murder, could have nothing to do with Carlotta, he went downstairs again, and met the landlord of the hotel and the Prince Zabrowsky, who had but a short

while before been informed of the shocking event, as the Baron's principal friend, and who having completed his toilette, was hastening to his room. The Prince looked pale, and as if the Pole's predictions had come true, and he had not slept. He was evidently exerting himself to the utmost to retain a composed exterior.

"My poor friend!" he said in low dull tones, "he had an awkward habit of bleeding himself at times. I have often warned him it would prove dangerous. But he suffered from a flow of blood to the head. Doubtless he has overdone it this time."

Then they entered the room, quite a little train, for many others had followed Harry Anderson's example, and joined themselves on to the landlord and the Prince Zabrowsky. One of the waiters and the Baron's servant were already in the room. The Prince advanced to the

bedside and bent over his friend. As he did so, he displaced the body a little, and the blood began to flow again.

"Now who is the murderer?" asked the Prince, referring to the popular superstition, and looking round with his suspicious Tartar eyes. As he did so, he caught sight of the Polish Count at that moment entering the room, and his eyes rested upon him. The eyes of everyone else, which had been fixed upon the Prince Zabrowsky, now followed the direction of his, and rested upon the Polish Count. The young man looked pale and seemed confused; possibly he was embarrassed by the amount of notice he seemed to be attracting. He advanced to the bedside and said quickly,

"I see how he has done it. He has been bleeding himself—so, and then he fainted from exhaustion." He had made

a gesture in the air as if to show how the Baron would have bled himself.

"I cannot quite see how a man could bleed himself in that way," said a doctor present, for the Prince Zabrowsky had not been summoned for some time; there had been considerable hesitation before the hotel-keeper could muster up courage to tell him of his friend's death, and now there were both doctors and lawyers in readiness to express an opinion.

"Why, look here," cried the Polish Count, and immediately threw himself upon the sofa in an attitude in which the dead man might possibly have lain. "See lying in this way the blood would flow but little; after a time not at all perhaps. Then he fell asleep, and turned over, and the blood gushed out."

The readiness with which he had thrown himself into the attitude, and the facility with which he had mastered the whole

situation at once struck every one present as suspicious. It seemed almost as if he had rehearsed the attitude before.

The doctor and one or two others lay down on the sofa, and tried to bleed themselves with imaginary lancets; to none of them did it come easily to do it, as the Baron von Wolff must have done it, if he had bled himself. The Pole threw himself on to the sofa again in despair, to him it seemed perfectly natural.

"Ah, but you see, you are young, and your bones seem peculiarly supple. I should not think that had been the case with the dead man," said the doctor at last.

"He was a first rate presdigitateur, he could do lots of things I could not do," said the young man eagerly, but no one listened to him. There was a little whispered conversation passing between the landlord and the head-waiter.

"What is it?" asked the Prince Zabrowsky.

"Oh, nothing," said the landlord confusedly. Then seeing he was attracting attention to himself by his reticence, he added hurriedly, "Only there was a little unfortunate mistake. I had been happy thinking no suspicion could possibly attach to anyone, and that this sudden death could only be considered a visitation of Providence, because François, Monsieur le Baron's servant, told me his master had always been so afraid of thieves, that he had been in the habit of locking him into his room at night and carrying away the key in his pocket, and that he had done so last night as usual, but it turns out—in fact it was an unfortunate mistake, when the hotel was built, the lock of this room precisely corresponds to the lock of another, and the keys are in fact identical."

"Who occupies the other room?" asked the Prince.

"M. le Comte has just moved down into it. It is next to yours, M. le Prince, you may remember." That was an artful turn that the landlord had given to his sentence upon the spur of the moment. "It was a most unfortunate mistake which has unfortunately never been rectified."

"Very unfortunate," said the Prince drily, and looked at the dead man.

"Is there anyone who had any interest in compassing the Baron von Wolff's death? That is the question I should like to ask," said a stout pompous little *avocat*. Harry Anderson took due note of the way in which the hotel-keeper, the waiter, and the Baron's servant all looked at once at the Prince Zabrowsky. It was curious, if only as showing how much is sometimes revealed in conversations below stairs. The gentlemen, who had been in the

smoking-room the night before, looked at the Prince, but also at the Polish Count. The latter was very pale, and wiping the moisture from his brow. He seemed to have a horror of the dead body, and kept always at a distance from it, yet could not turn away his eyes from it.

"I want to ask one question, if I might be excused," said Harry Anderson, "if the Baron von Wolff did not bleed himself, which possibility has, I am sure, suggested itself to every one present, would it not be natural that he should have cried out or struggled?"

"Not if he had been powerfully drugged first," said one of the doctors; "and there is an odour about this room—"

"Exactly so," said Harry Anderson. "I did not wish to be the first to remark it, but I have perceived it ever since I entered. Now a man would not surely be likely to take a narcotic, because he had a

flow of blood to the head, which is the malady under which the deceased suffered, as I understand from M. le Prince. I do not assert it, I only appeal to your superior knowledge, Monsieur, being myself quite unversed in medicine."

The doctor bowed politely.

"You are perfectly right," he said. "That narcotic settles the matter. The dead man did not bleed himself. I thought it was impossible before."

"As the Baron's most intimate friend, I shall hold myself bound to see that this affair is properly investigated into. It seems to me that considerable suspicion attaches to—*Où est ce Polonais!*"

The tone in which the Prince uttered the last words was much as he might have used in speaking of a dog, a dog whose name had been taken away, so that everyone must feel there was nothing left to be

done but to hang it straightway. The Pole, however, had disappeared.

"Monsieur went away when people began to speak of a narcotic," said a waiter, looking up gravely.

When a bottle of narcotic was found in the Pole's room afterwards, and the doctors, analysing it, found that though it looked full now, it had been filled up with water, and pronounced, in which everyone else agreed, that it was the odour of this particular narcotic that had hung about the Baron von Wolff's room, there was no hesitation any longer about speaking of him as the murdered man, or about taking the Pole into custody. Great compliments were paid to Harry Anderson on his acuteness, and he was requested to serve as witness at the approaching trial, to testify to his having been conscious of the odour from the moment he first entered the Baron von Wolff's room. The Pole

had at first maintained that he had bought the narcotic to soothe his nerves after the shock of hearing of the Baron von Wolff's death; that he suffered from disease of the heart, and that he was in the habit of taking opium or some other narcotic, whenever anything agitated him, having been warned against violent emotion. But when the contents of the bottle had been analysed, and it had been proved to have been filled up with water, the young man turned sulky, and would answer no further questions. No one had any longer the least doubt but that he was guilty.

Only the Princess Zabrowsky asserted loudly, and to every one who would listen to her, that the Prince was the murderer; and she gave bail to such a large amount for the Polish Count, that he was allowed to sleep in the hotel, instead of being carried off to prison at once, as had been intended.

"I always said they would quarrel in the end," she said. "I always thought it would come to this; and now the Prince knows that the Count has got possession of some of his secrets, and he accuses him, that he may get rid of him also. But the young man is innocent. He is a noted duellist; would he be likely to commit murder? Now the Prince is a coward; everyone knows he cannot bear the sight of a drawn sword."

But this defence did not go down in Switzerland, where Republican burghers thought that a man, who could take life in one way, might not think so seriously of taking it in another; and altogether the Princess's support did the young man more harm than good. His intimacy with her was considered against him.

Meanwhile the Prince Zabrowsky said, calmly, "My poor friend, the late Baron, was the repository of some secrets I should

not want generally known. Many gentlemen here must have heard the ill-suppressed delight of this unhappy young man in worming them out of him. He doubtless thought then that he would make capital of them, and his only obstacle was my having confided them already to another. I think it a debt of honour that I owe to my late friend to use every effort in my power that his murderer should not escape from paying the penalty of his dastardly crime."

If all debts of honour were paid as scrupulously as the Prince Zabrowsky's to his late friend, it would go better with the world. There were fabulous reports as to the quantity and quality of corruption he was using to insure the Pole's being pronounced guilty. He had not thought it necessary to allude to the fact, that the Pole's being possessed of some of his own secrets might contribute something to his zeal in paying his debt of honour to his

friend; but though he did not allude to this himself, people speculated none the less freely about it on this account, and they thought none the better of the man who had secrets he did not want generally known, and which were of a nature to make capital out of.

It was pretty well known that since the Baron's death the Princess Zabrowsky had refused even to see her husband; she kept her doors generally locked, and was afraid to be alone for an instant, as if she dreaded being murdered also herself. Many people went to see her, and to every one she asserted the Pole's innocence and her husband's guilt. But no one believed her; they looked upon her words as the ravings of a half-distracted woman. They pitied her exceedingly, but the general opinion was, that she was at least a little mad.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

